1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT? Yao FT?

agreement also in the question by the marriage surcties. The couple are exhorted to 585
calm disputes to the surcties, and to consult the diviner in case of sickness.[1] After the
rite these two surcties have special responsibilities towards the couple; grievances
are referred to them, and they must be present when adultery cases are heard in
court. If the marriage witness ceremony has not been performed, the relationship is
not regarded as legal and no adultery compensation can be claimed by the husband.

Divorce used to be a private affair, which was merely signalled by one party giving 586
to the other an arrow as a token of separation.[2] Nowadays all divorce cases go to court.
The woman is usually asked to choose between her husband and the adulterer, and
the compensation paid to the former, if she decides to leave him, is higher—amounting
to about 10s. A man can be sent away from the village by his wife's kin, but if he
has given no grounds for divorce he can claim compensation and will also take back [478]
any gifts made to his wife. A few small gifts to his mother-in-law are not reclaimed.
Divorces are easily obtained and frequent. Grounds for the divorce of a man may
include failure to pay hut tax, one of the specific duties of the husband.

The custom of making a marriage payment is recorded by Johnston[3] (on the east 583
coast of Lake Nyasa) as a relatively new adoption. When given it is divided between 177
the bride's father, mother, and mother's brother and brother.[4]

Slavery

Domestic slavery was an important institution in the Yao social system. Slaves were 567
obtained by capture, purchase, or in compensation for injury.[5] A man would pay a
debt by giving slaves (slaves or members of his matrilineal kin group) to his creditors.[6]
A man might voluntarily enslave himself to a man having charge of many women, as
a means of obtaining a wife.[7] The children of a free man and a slave woman were not
emancipated, as their father could not take them from the village of their mother's
master, who had the right to sell them.[8] Slaves took part in the ordinary life of the
village; women slaves ranked as junior wives of their masters and shared the usual
work of women. Men might be supplied with guns for hunting or might accompany
their masters to war, trade for them, spin, weave, sew, make baskets.[9] The institution [509]
of domestic slavery was an expression of a dominant motif in Yao culture—the associa-
tion of status with a large number of dependents. Its abolition by the British was in
itself a major blow to the prestige and authority of the chiefs.

Information about the social organization of the Yao in Portuguese East Africa is 184
scanty, but it is in agreement with what is known of the Nyasaland Yao; Henkel, who 603
knew the Yao in Lindi district, Tanganyika Territory, confirms the correctness of
Rowse's account of the South Nyasa Yao.

The Yao came into Nyasaland in small parties of kinsmen. Their experience and 175
their superior weapons soon enabled them to dominate the Nyanja among whom they
settled, and today they dominate the population of the Southern Province. They are [481]
organized into loose groups of villages, under petty, independent chiefs. They were [511]

[1] Swanson, q. v., p. 242; Hynde, q. v.; Johnston, q. v., pp. 814-15; Macdonald, q. v., vol. i, p. 251; Werner, q. v., pp. 109-10.
[2] Q. v., pp. 111-2.
[3] Johnston, q. v., p. 480.
[4] Swanson, q. v., p. 242.
[5] Werner, q. v., pp. 111-2; Swanson, q. v., p. 242.
[6] Stigand, q. v., p. 110 (not a reliable source).
[7] Macdonald, q. v., vol. i, pp. 250-1.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Werner, q. v., p. 113.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT? Tso FT?

never to have had any large-scale central political organization, and their history is full of occasions when one group of Tso has attacked another. Even within his own area the authority of the chief was not, apparently, sufficiently strong to prevent one village headman from raiding his neighbours; the chief maintained no standing army.[1] The chief held certain rights and privileges. He was entitled to the ground tusk of any elephant found in his territory (the finder was rewarded after it had been sold, with a cloth); he received tribute in food,[2] with which he entertained visitors. He took a share of the spoils of war and was also entitled to annual labour service and to a gift when he made a new burial place. Apart from his military and judicial responsibilities, he had authority to settle when and where initiation ceremonies should be held.[3] The right to hold these ceremonies was sought after by the village headmen as a mark of status.[4] The chiefs or headmen of certain families had the right to wear a white cloth bound round their temples as insignia of rank.[5]

In addition the chief had a certain ritual status. He was thought to incur mystical danger by contact with death, and so was not allowed to attend a funeral nor to eat a chicken brought by a messenger announcing a death, nor to accompany his military expeditions. He was supposed to have great power through special medicines. He had to make offerings to the ancestors, especially in affairs concerning the whole people, such as drought or epidemic. He was expected to give a burial cloth at the death of an important man. At his death a period of social disorganization was recognized, members of his village were allowed to pillage and rape, until he was buried.

Succession to the chiefly office was matrilineal. The chief's position was based partly on his status as the senior male of his own matrilineal kin group, partly on his wealth. His command over slaves, guns, and carriers to the coast was greater than that of others, and from these his military strength was derived, for a chief was powerless without his following of dependents. The chief of the area was also headman of his own village. In fact, the position and duties of a village headman (except that he could not exact tribute)[6] reproduced in small scale those of the chief. The headmen also were in mystical danger through contact with death and were the channel through which the ancestors were approached in affairs concerning the village. They, too, built up their prestige and wealth by shrewd activities. They seem to have been largely independent of the chief, carrying on slave raids of their own, and if they could gain a sufficient following, they might break away from the chief, and set up their own chiefdoms.[7]

The chief ruled through a hierarchy of headmen. His councillors were superior headmen, placed over a number of village headmen. Commoners could approach the chief only through the councillor in whose area their village belonged. The councillor's special duties were to report daily to the chief on the affairs of his district, to advise, and to arbitrate in the chief's own domestic affairs, e.g. in conflicts between the chief and his brothers and nephews. The councillors were not necessarily relatives of the chief,[8] but were chosen on account of their general status in the community, and their

[1] Elmslie, p. 180; men of the Tso in the Shire highlands: 'Every such man was one might be set down as a chief . . . petty quarrels of petty chiefs were abundant . . .' Rev Macdonald, 1889, vol. i, pp. 189 and 199.
[2] Elmslie, p. 180.
[3] Macdonald, 1889, vol. i, p. 18; Werner, 1906, p. 260.
[4] Hetherwick, 1902, p. 210; Macdonald, 1889, vol. i, p. 199.
[5] Macdonald, 1889, vol. i, p. 199.
[6] Elmslie, p. 180; Hetherwick, 1902, p. 210.
[7] Elmslie, p. 180; Macdonald, 1889, vol. i, p. 199.
[8] Elmslie, p. 180; Hetherwick, 1902, p. 210.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Tao FT7

Birth

Birth takes place in the bush, some distance from the hamlet, in the presence of female relatives of the woman and of her husband. If the child is stillborn, or miscarried, it is buried in the bush. The husband and wife must abstain from sexual intercourse for some months, until a special ritual intercourse is performed. A man who breaks this taboo is liable to contract a fatal disease, *kumanga*. Difficult births are attributed to: (a) a curse spoken by a mutilated relative—this is made effective by the intervention of the ancestors, and to remove it it is necessary to perform a rite making clear that no malice is borne; (b) the adultery of the woman or her husband, in which case confession will save the woman from dying; and (c) sorcery.

If a child is born alive it is brought to the hut of the mother or one of her female relatives, where it is secluded until the naming ceremony, about six days later. Only after the naming is the child considered to be a member of society. A second child should not be born while the first is still suckling, i.e. for about two years. When the child is about four or five months old it is ritually immunized against the dangers of sexual activity, and the parents may resume relations. Elaborate magical precautions are taken to ensure the child's survival. Children sleep with their mother, the boys until they are old enough to go to the boys' dormitory, and the girls until marriage.[1]

Initiation

The yearly initiation ceremonies, *unyago*, are the principal cultural institution of the Yao. That for the boys, *lipando*, is the more important, and may only take place under a chief or superior village headman, whereas a girls' initiation ceremony may take place under an ordinary headman. The right to hold a boys' initiation ceremony therefore becomes a mark of status which is jealously disputed.[2] The right is expressed as 'having a *chisi*'. A *chisi* is the small basket in which the special sacrificial flour is carried.

Yao carry out initiation between the ages of seven and eleven, whereas generally in East Africa it is postponed until puberty.[3] In response to requests from the headmen the chief appoints the time and place of the boys' initiation ceremony for a group of villages. It is held at the end of the dry season, before the bush is burned. Each initiate is accompanied by a sponsor, *nkolimo*, who may be a brother, uncle, or friend. Before they set out for the place appointed to be *lipando*, they all assemble before the chief to be anointed with millet-flour specially prepared by his head wife. The word *lipando* refers to a forked stick over which the sacrificial flour is poured. This stick is planted at the place of assembly, the *mwalimo*. The boys, their sponsors, and the master of ceremonies, *nfumu*, are accompanied with dancing as far as *mwalimo* by their friends. The next day the initiates go to a spot in the bush, where the circumcision (formerly only an incision) is performed, and remain in the bush school, *unyago*, for about two months, until the wounds are completely healed. The Yao circumcision rite is said not to have been introduced by the Arabs.[4]

During these weeks the boys are subjected to rigorous discipline and instructed in various skills and tribal lore. They sleep in long dormitory huts, with partitions dividing the boys of different villages from each other. The chief appoints the day for

[1] Rhoune, work cited, p. 111.
[2] Stefaniszyn, work cited, p. 110.
[3] Stefaniszyn, work cited, p. 111.
[4] Livingstone, work cited, p. 81.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

175 622 641 643 whatsoever. But a man often decamps by night taking with him many slaves belonging to his fellow-citizens; he then goes to some influential chief who may be only too glad to give the fugitive ground and to establish him as a sub-chief. Freemen who thus leave are deemed by their former chief, who welcomes every opportunity of shooting or capturing them.[1]

175 554 622 643 648 In this way village headmen, by increasing their following, increased their power against the chief. MacDonald records:

> When a person has acquired several villages, he becomes a higher headman, intermediate between the chief and the owner of a single village. Each headman lives in the village he likes best, and leaves his 'brothers' to manage his other villages. But a headman of great ambition often places his 'brothers' all around him, decides their cases, and practically governs a small kingdom of his own. If he lives far from his chief, one might suppose that he was quite independent. When a quarrel arises between the chief of the country and an important headman, the latter may rebel, and found a new kingdom, thus depriving the old chief perhaps of one-third of the villages in his dominion.[2]

MacDonald cites the case of Mkanda of Chirambulo, who was at first a headman of Kabtpuma's but rebelled, and went to live on the southern side of the mountain.[3] He also observes that on the other hand, 'a headman may keep up his chief's authority in a district that the latter could not otherwise hold'.[4] Elsewhere he says:

> In and around his own village the chief of the country is a terrible power, and his government is supported by the most prompt and severe punishments. But in distant parts of his dominions, where influential headmen live, he may be little known, although as a matter of theory he is supposed to settle all grave disputes even in remote villages.[5]

175 643 The history of the Yao chieftaincies in MacDonald's time, and as told to me by my informants, is that of constant division into independent chiefdoms. In the Zulu and Bemba polities a strong state structure included a pattern of civil war and the main-

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 127-8.
[2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 32.
[3] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 155.
[4] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 156-9.
[5] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 134-5.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

crop failures. Also I was told that important village headmen are buried with their heads pointing to the east.

The Yao concept of the past is reflected in the principles of political organization of these Machinga chiefdoms. The invasion is the datum point from which rank mainly stems. We may classify modern headmen into: those who were in the area before the Yao invasion, i.e. the Aborigines; the Invaders; and those who have come in since the invasion and have had to submit themselves to the Machinga chief, i.e. the Newcomers. The principle behind this classification of headmen is fundamental to Yao political structure. Stated most simply it is the rule that MacDonald quoted in describing the development of local organization: 'However large the settlement may become the man that is first in is the chief or headman.'[1] This is, of course, somewhat of a simplification, but the rule contains the essence of the principle. It was reversed for the Aboriginal Nyanja because the Yao subjugated them. But the claims of the Nyanja chiefs to rank because they had occupied the land first were recognized by the Yao who absorbed them into the social structure in positions of high rank.

But the principle holds among the Yao themselves, and for the Ngoni in their movements after the White conquest. The operation of the principle is clearest in the structure of small local areas such as Chiwalo's. When Chiwalo's area was first settled, just after World War I, there were large tracts of unoccupied land. The first headmen to move into this region were Cigwaja, Kapalema, Nyanja, Makata and Mumbwa. The local chief Chiwalo followed Cigwaja, but as Cigwaja was one of the Invader headmen under Chiwalo during the period of invasion, he now recognized Chiwalo as the chief. The area that is now Chiwalo's chiefdom was divided out among these five headmen. As other headmen came into the area they had to approach one of these five for land rights. These, when granted, were granted irrevocably in a block to the new village headman who then had sole rights to distribute the land afterwards. If he had the land to spare, he may have granted a portion of it to yet another village headman, and this action was also irrevocable. The land occupation pattern in any particular area is therefore extremely complex, because in addition to the village garden areas, indivi-

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i, 147. See p. 33 above.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

heads may hold garden plots in other village areas which they have temporarily borrowed in a private arrangement with the individual owner. But when the system is seen in relation to the pattern of occupation of the area, it is greatly simplified. Each garden may be traced back to the original owner through three or four village headmen. The pattern of the reversion of rights follows the same system. The garden land of a village which has recently moved in and is moving out again reverts directly to the village headman who granted it. If he has moved out it reverts back to the village headman from whom it was in turn acquired.[1] These original landholders form the central points of locally organized areas to-day. For example, in Chiwale's area there is Chiwale at the top of the scale, then there are Kapalema, Cigwija, Mumbwa, Mikata and Nyanje as the most important village headmen, and they take precedence over any of the other village headmen. All the others who have come into the area since then, of whom many are Ngoni, rank very much lower.

From the smallest village to the chiefdom as a whole, therefore, there is a series of overlapping areas of organization. In any particular area chosen at random in a chiefdom as large as, say, Kawinga's, there will probably be two or three small villages which recognize the primacy of one of their number. The headman of this village may be called in to arbitrate in disputes over land or personal quarrels or even in the private consultations held after the death of a village member (*mapeto*). But the superior headman in turn recognizes *his* superior who was in the area before him. This system is extended over larger and larger areas, each headman in turn recognizing some other headman who was in the area before him, until ultimately the primacy of the *Invader chief* over all his headmen is established by the same principle. There is no clear-cut district organization as among the Zulu and Bemba.[2]

[1] See also "Preliminary Notes on Land Tenure and Agriculture among the Machinga Yao", *Human Problems*, 2 (1950), 1–13. This system of land-holding has been called "reverse of bolding" by Gluckman. See his *Essays on Lozi Land and Royal Property*, Rhodes-Livingstone Paper, No. 10 (Livingstone, 1943), p. 29 ff.

[2] See the essays by Gluckman and Richards in Fortes, M., and Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *African Political Systems*, Oxford University Press for the International African Institute (London, 1940).

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

These headmen who are the centres of local social structure are the higher headmen that MacDonald mentions.[1] Many of them to-day are the descendants of the traditional councillors (*akuru*) who were sent out to the extremities of the chiefdoms to be the outer governors in these areas.[2] Their villages are social centres in that many disputes are taken to these important headmen before they are taken to the Native Authority's court. For example, the dispute between the women of Nampeya and Cikuwira was taken to Ntilwilibwi.[3] The chief usually orders headmen to assemble at the villages of important headmen when he has directions to issue to them. Very frequently the Administrative officers camp there for the night on their tours and call the headmen in to them for conference. The placing of mosques at the villages of these important headmen also indicates their significance as social centres. Most Moslem villages have small mosques which the more devout use for the morning and evening prayers during Ramadan only. At the villages of important headmen larger mosques have been built and these are used for the midday prayers on Fridays (*jumu*), when most of the Moslems in each area assemble in their best clothes for communal prayers. Large brick mosques have been built at the court villages of Jalasi, Liwonde and Kawinga. There are other large mosques at the villages of chiefdoms such as Chiwalo, Chamba, Mpeta, and of important headmen such as Kangombe, Nyonje and many others. These chiefs and headmen were all lowaders and are, as I shall show later, almost by definition Moslems. They are also headmen of high rank so that the placing of the mosque, and the other features of local social structure, are largely derivatives of the system of ranking.

Rank therefore underlies the structure of local areas as well as the structure of the chiefdoms as wholes. It is, as I show later, closely associated with the historical origin of the headmen. Yet the correlation is not perfect and I shall show that other factors tend to militate against the fixed historical ranking of headmen. Nevertheless, the principle of primacy is the most important single factor.

[1] See Chap. II, p. 36.
[2] See Chap. IV, pp. 90-5.
[3] See Chap. V, p. 130.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

their councillors at the courts. If they were relatives of the chief it is almost certain that he would have mentioned them. We may assume then that the true proportion of unrelated headmen among the Newcomers is, as we would expect, very much greater than among the Invaders. 622 643

Of the total of 424 Administrative villages there were ten in which I did not record the formal relationship to the chief. In Table IX I set out the proportions in these categories among the Administrative village headmen, and there is no radical difference between these proportions and those for all village headmen. 622 643 602

TABLE IX

PROPORTIONS OF KINSMEN AND NON-KINSMEN AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE HEADMEN*

	Chief's Relatives						Non-Relatives	Total
	Direct			Clan				
	Mat.	Pat.	Aff.	Mat.	Pat.	Aff.		
Invaders . .	18 (13·0)	23 (16·6)	6 (4·4)	24 (17·4)	11 (8·0)	9 (6·5)	43 (31·1)	136 (99·5%)
Newcomers .	0 (0·0)	0 (0·0)	11 (4·1)	20 (7·5)	11 (4·1)	14 (5·2)	213 (79·1)	269† (100·5%)
Total . .	18	23	17	44	22	23	256	405

$\phi = 6$; $\phi' = 30.5$; $p = 0.000$.

* This table includes the 10 Aborigines.

† Excludes 10 villages for which I have not recorded this information.

To summarize, we may characterize the Invaders as Yao, Moslems, and members of their chiefs by historical connections and kinship ties. The Newcomers and the Aborigines on the other hand are of different tribes. They have more diverse religions, are not connected to the chiefs by kinship ties as closely as the Invaders are, and do not share with them the strong bond of being co-Invaders. It is in the struggle for prestige and rank that these bonds with the chiefs assume significance. 622 643 602 563 559

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

CHAPTER IV

PRESTIGE AND RANK AMONG THE VILLAGE HEADMEN

The Political Process as the Struggle of Headmen for Rank

622 559

THUS far I have been describing the composition of the three categories of headmen: the Aborigines, the Invaders and the Newcomers. This classification is fundamental to the system of ranking among them, and is the most important single factor. But rank among village headmen is determined by other factors as well. We may summarize the most important of these thus:

A. *Rank from association with the chief.*
   1. Accompanied the chief during the Invasion.
   2. Kinship with the chief.
B. *Rank from opposition to the chief.*
   1. Prestige from another area.
   2. Large following.

The struggle of the headmen for power and prestige, both among themselves and against the chief, constitutes the political process. This is expressed mainly in the competition for various symbols of prestige. In this process, village headmen may use whatever connection with the chief they can, in order to gain his favour. They may use their direct kinship or clanship with him, or some more nebulous connection, such as the friendship of their fathers with him, or they may play upon the history of the association of their village with his ancestors in the invasion of the country. If they cannot exploit some link with the chief in their struggle for prestige, they may press their claims on the basis that their villages are large, and that if they are frustrated they may waive their allegiance to another chief.

The historical fact of being of Invader stock is clearly a major determinant of rank. Invaders always have the advantage over the Newcomers because of their historical association with the chief. They are more closely bound to him: they participate

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

in the ritual of the chieftaincy more than Newcomers do: provide the chief's councillors; pay rain-levies and in other ways express their closer tie with him. But there is no rigid class structure based on tradition. All villages are liable to break up. If for any reason the village's internal cohesion begins to weaken, its members scatter and it disappears as a political entity. Invader as well as Newcomer villages may thus disintegrate. The smaller sections of an invader village which now set up villages of their own have to compete with the larger and more united villages of Newcomer origin. Another facet of the political process, therefore, is the continual competition of village headmen who are trying to maintain the unity of the villages under them, and to increase their following, so that their power against the chief and the other village headmen may be enhanced.

Marks of Rank

In the vernacular it is the *name* of the village which is said to be important.[1] This name is usually taken from the founder of the village and is assumed by a new village headman when he succeeds to the position: when a new village is founded the headman gives it his name to distinguish it from the parent village. But the importance that is ascribed to a name is clearly the importance of the corporate group which it represents. The headman is an incumbent of a social status, the prestige of which is drawn from the corporate group which he represents in his public dealings.

The prestige of village headmen is shown particularly in the degree of deference accorded to them by other village headmen. The headman with the highest prestige is of course the chief: the original leader of the invaders. Below him may be ranked the rest of the village headmen in a relatively fixed pyramidal hierarchy, determined by a number of factors which I shall outline later.

The dress of important headmen is often an indicator of prestige but this criterion is not infallible nowadays when labour migrants, craftsmen and tobacco growers can afford to buy better clothes than many headmen. But it is usually a fairly safe guide that when a man carries a long stick and is dressed in long flowing

[1] *Litso lya lukungwe*—lit. "the name is great".

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

robes (a gown not unlike a woman's dressing-gown), wears a bright-coloured turban, and has one or two men walking behind him, he is a rather important village headman. One particular item of clothing in the Kawinga, Liwonde and Nyambi areas, is the scarlet headband which some village headmen may wear. I shall discuss this later in the context of the competition of village headmen for rank.

Another external characteristic of rank, which seems to have disappeared with the changing economic structure of Nyasaland, was the carrying of knives (*mbejo*) by important village headmen. Previously, status was indicated by the type and size of knife carried in public. The chief usually carried the largest and most ornate. The knife taken from Kawinga on his surrender to Portuguese East Africa was about 18 inches long and had a decorated ivory handle. Smaller knives of similar pattern belonged to his headmen.[1] Nowadays, many young commoners carry knives two or even three feet long, made from the broken blades of motor-car springs.

The right of important village headmen to build fences[2] at the back of their huts is also a mark of prestige which seems to have lost its significance. About 30 years ago only important headmen had the right to erect a fence at the back of their huts. This fence, made of tall grass about six feet high, enclosed the grain stores and other food supplies of the household and formed a private compound in which the headman's wife and slaves carried on their daily tasks.[3] It seems likely that private compounds and slavery were positively associated, so that only the important village headmen who had many slaves found it necessary to build fences. All chiefs and most important headmen to-day still erect these fences. Those who hold initiation rights are obliged to build them because, when the initiands return from the seclusion phase of the initiation ceremony, they are supposed to spend one night in the headman's private compound before going back to their villages. But nowadays, minor village headmen and commoners also frequently build these

[1] See fn. 4, Chap. II, p. 38.

[2] *Lusanje*, pl. *mbanje*. The enclosed space or "compound" is enclosed. Typical hut compounds are depicted on Plate IX (*a*) and (*b*), facing p. 102.

[3] MacDonald suggests that the common term *banyere* for women is derived from the adverb *banyere*—on the other side (of the fence).

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

compounds, especially in areas where there are man-eating lions,[1] so that it is no longer an *infallible* indicator of the hut-owner's rank.

Minor village headmen always allow their superiors to sit on a chair. If village headmen of commensurate status are present, chairs may be sought for them all. But a minor village headman never occupies a chair, even if one is available, in the presence of his superior. At a meeting, for example, a chief occupies a chair and so may his most important *akoma* or councillor. The more important headmen sit about on separate mats, for a man only shares a mat with his equals, and then only rarely. Junior headmen, however many there are, have to try to squeeze themselves on to one mat or squat on the ground.

Important headmen also have the right of walking in front of their juniors. If there are three or four headmen returning from, say, a court case, they arrange themselves in the pathway in an order which reflects their rank. As they file down the narrow field paths the leader is the most senior among the group. After him come the other headmen and last of all the commoners. This order of precedence is also followed when initiands pass through the tribal initiation ceremonies. The sisters' sons and other matrilineal descendants of important headmen precede those of the less important headmen. At Chiwale's last also, I have noticed that the more important headmen sit under the verandah while listening to private cases. The less important headmen sit with the commoners under a shelter or out in the sun.

I have been discussing the visible marks of prestige. But high rank also tends to carry with it some other privileges which are not immediately observable. The most obvious is Government recognition. I have already mentioned that under the 1912 Ordinance, village headmen were recognized by the Administration. These Administrative village headmen, who had certain duties to perform, were paid a small annuity and were in earlier days given a "book" in which the tax payments could be recorded. To-day, the Yao still describe Government recognition as "having a book". Administrative village headmen derived more benefit from Government recognition than merely an

[1] The huts in Plate IX (*a*) and (*b*) are in Nkanyera area where there are man-eating lions. Most huts have compounds. A large proportion of huts in areas where there are no lions also have compounds.

C22, 559, 641 ● ceremony. This recognition publicly announced their superior status, because not all headmen could be Administrative headmen. We do not know exactly how the Administrative headmen were appointed when the Ordinance was introduced. The observable results, however, are that no headman, so far as I am aware, who was of superior status in the indigenous ranking system, is now an Administrative headman to-day. Being an Administrative headman is thus in itself an indicator of rank.

C22, 559, 641, 915, 716, 88 Rather more important than this is the right to hold initiation ceremonies. MacDonald says that these rights were held by the chief only, but it is not clear whether the word 'chief' used here refers to the village headman or the 'chief of the land'. Nowadays, the rights are held by village headmen as well as the chief. The right to hold initiation ceremonies is signified by the possession of a small flat basket (*ziele*) in which the ceremonial flour for the ceremonies is carried. When a chief grants a *ziele* or ceremonial basket to a village headman, what in fact he does is to grant him permission to approach the spirits of his ancestors. The headman uses the basket on three occasions during the initiation ceremonies. First, before the ceremony is announced he pours a little cone of sorghum meal at the root of a special tree in or near the village. This tree is known as the *mulo*, or the divine-tree where all offerings to the ancestors are made. While he works the flour through his fingers to allow it to fall in a cone, he calls on his ancestral spirits and asks them to intercede on his behalf with the spirits of the chief's ancestors. He then formally requests permission to hold the initiation ceremony. This cone is left intact through the night. Should it collapse the interpretation is that the spirits are not willing that the ceremony should take place and it is postponed for some days. Offerings are made until eventually the cone, by remaining intact through the night, indicates that all is propitious for the ceremony to be conducted. The second occasion when the ceremonial basket is used is when the village headman or chief goes down to the grass sheds where the rites of segregation and aggregation take place. Here he pours flour over a twig and begs the safe conduct of the initiands through this physically and mystically dangerous period. Third, each individual initiand, and his or her mother, is touched on the forehead and forearm with the flour on the evening that the initiands leave for the grass sheds. During

C22, 559, 641, 915, 716, 88

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the last rite the owner of the oblational basket exacts a payment of threepence or so from each parent. The headman does gain financially from the initiation ceremony, but it would be wrong to imagine that this is the only reason why he should want to have the right to hold it. The competition for the rights, which are limited to a few, is part of the general political process whereby village headmen compete for privileges and advantages over their fellows.

Village headmen may hold either the boys' or the girls' initiation ceremonies or both. Sometimes, when they hold both, they delegate the girls' ceremony to a younger brother or some other relative without referring to the chief. For example, Kawinga's clan relative and important retainer, Ngalawanga, had the rights to both initiation ceremonies, and he allowed his perpetual 'son' Isa' to hold the girls'. Also in Nyambi area, Mpinje, who had both initiation rights, allowed his perpetual 'son' Nantanga to have the girls' ceremony. It is generally conceded that the right to hold the boys' initiation ceremonies is more valuable than the right to hold the girls'. H. L. Duff, writing in 1906, had also noticed this when he wrote:

> The respective ceremonies seem to be considered as on a somewhat different footing, for the boys' *nyago* can properly be held only at the village and under the patronage of, so to say, the paramount chief of the neighbourhood, whereas the girls' initiation may take place under the auspices of an inferior headman. This distinction is still jealously observed and any breach of the chief's privileges is apt to lead to bitter dispute.[2]

The sanction the chief holds over the headmen in this respect is mystical. A village headman believes that the initiation will be a success (that is, that the initiands will be free from the harm of wild beasts and illness, or the circumcision wounds of the boys will heal quickly and well), only if the approval of the chief's ancestors is obtained. He cannot hold the initiation ceremonies, unless he has obtained the basket from the chief.

Most people still follow tribal initiation customs, but in the extremes of the area in which I worked, religious ideas are bringing about a change. In the north in Jalasi's area where Islam

[1] The first his was the son of Ngalawanga and this relationship is preserved by the modern incumbents of the headmanships. See Chap. V, p. 111.

[2] Duff, H. L., *Nyasaland under the Foreign Office* (London, 1906), 310.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

98 178 345 633 594

is most powerful, there is a tendency for the Islamic initiation ceremony for boys, *jando*, and the Islamic initiation ceremony for girls, *unondo*, to displace the tribal equivalents, *lupanda* and *dipoko*. These Moslem initiations are conducted by Moslem teachers (*mwalimu*) and are not controlled by the chief. Though it also involves the circumcision of the boys, *jando* is very much shorter and the boys are secluded for only a week. Some say it is becoming more popular because it is less expensive for the boys' parents. In Chiwalo's area the two ceremonies are run concurrently. The boys and girls go through the normal segregation rites at the beginning of the ceremony, but an *mwalimu* circumcises the boys according to Islamic practice. At the segregation rites at the end of the period of seclusion, the star and crescent appears as one of the symbols along with the whale (*nyangumi*), antelope (*nkulupi*), leopard (*simwi*), and the other tribal effigies which are shown to the boys. Christianity in the south has had a similar effect. The Missions actively discouraged initiation ceremonies in the past. Many of the people in Mpona's and Malemia's area have dropped the custom, or have integrated prayers and other parts of Christian ritual into the ceremonies, though circumcision is steadfastly retained. The effect of these changes is that the important ritual control the chief had over the ceremony has been undermined, and so the prestige attached to it has also begun to fade in these areas. What I describe about the prestige of village headmen and the rights they have to initiation ceremonies is only partially true, and is failing every daily. The correlation I seek to establish is also disturbed by the fact that among the Ngoni there is a slightly different initiation ceremony (*chinamwali*) for boys. Most Ngoni send their boys to the Yao initiations but there are still some who hold their own traditional ceremonies. These are not within the mystical control of the chief so that some Ngoni headmen are outside the competition for the initiation rights. I should say, however, that most compete with the Yao for Yao initiation rights so that this factor is not as disturbing as appears at first sight. In addition, village headmen who move into a new area usually must obtain the permission of the chief before they may use the initiation rights they hold before coming into the area.

622 599 574

There are other indicators of the general high rank of village headmen. Junior headmen, like commoners, must give a special

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT? Yao FT?

Arabic greeting to their seniors. This is done by placing the left hand on the chest and bending slightly forward to the village headman, saying, '*Sakeye*'. The senior should then respond '*Alaye*'. Also, important headmen are usually buried in the centre of the village, not in the common graveyard. The tomb of an important headman or personage, usually built of stone, concrete or brick, is called *nsai*. The right to bury in the village must be obtained from the chief 'because the land is his', and in Kawinga's area a fee of 6*s.* must be paid to him.

(522) (559) (573) (744)

The Struggle for Government Recognition

Thus far, I have been discussing the ways in which the rank of village headmen may be expressed. I now describe the way in which these marks of prestige are associated in the three categories of headmen we have distinguished, and in what way the competition between them is phrased. I have already described how all the chiefs in the areas to which I am referring are all successors of the original leaders of the invasions, and are usually the present Government representatives or Native Authorities.

(522) (559) (573) (698)

The people must recognize the rank of chief because mystical beliefs prescribe activities in one direction, and because the limiting structure of the White Administration does so in another. A village headman cannot hold initiation ceremonies without the permission of the chief because of the mystical sanction, but the chief also has legal authority over his subject headmen. He as Native Authority is recognized by the Government and is its representative to his people. The Native Authority Ordinance (1933) specifically imposes penalties on those who do not recognize the authority of the chief. Under Section 12 of the Ordinance, the Native Authority may arrest without warrant any person who is accused of failing to obey his order or direction, interferes with his lawful duties, professes to be a chief or assumes the duties of a chief without Government approval. Under Section 13(i) severe penalties are imposed on any person who conspires against or in any way attempts to undermine the lawful power and authority of any chief or Native Authority. His position is therefore greatly strengthened against the village headmen and I have been told of one or two prosecutions by chiefs under this section. Nowadays, the mere threat of

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FTT Yao FTT

632 643 539 678 action under this Ordinance is sufficient to cow his opponents. Therefore, the chief may also control the rise to power of his headmen because he is a Government official. At the same time a village headman may not move away to form a chieftaincy of his own: should he migrate with his followers somewhere, he will always find himself under a White system of Administration which upholds some other chief against him. The rank system must operate within a circumscribed framework and in reference to the chiefs.

632 637 678 I have already mentioned that being an Administrative village headman is a mark of prestige. Most of the struggle for rank revolves around this axis. Under the 1912 Ordinance, village headmen were only recognized if they had at least six taxable huts under them and they were paid a small annuity proportionate to the number of their taxable huts.[1] Before a headman could be recognized, therefore, he had to gather around him at least six tax-payers. After a headman had been recognized, the more villagers he could attract the higher his annuity. This situation is one with which the Yao headmen were long familiar. It is indeed the same process that went on before the Whites came, and that was outlined so clearly by Duff MacDonald, except that it is now cast in slightly different form. In consonance with the new money economy, superior status, marked by more dependants, brings a higher financial reward. But it would be false to imagine that the prospect of financial gain is the only spur to a village headman's attempts to enlarge his following. A headman of a large village as such, is still a 'big' village headman.

632 643 539 678 A headman who has sufficient followers to enable him to press a claim for a 'hook' goes to the chief for it. The chief considers the merits of the case, but is unwilling to grant too many 'hooks' in his area. If he supports the claim the matter is referred to the District Commissioner, who considers the application, not in terms of the indigenous struggle for rank, but in terms of general Administrative considerations, such as finance,

[1] A definite rate of remuneration was fixed in 1918: it was computed at 10s. for every ten taxes. See Murray, *Handbook*, 140. Under the 1933 Ordinance the remuneration was fixed at 4d. per Government tax of 6s. to a village headman and 2d. per 6s. to a Native Authority. *Report on Native Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1933*, Government Printer (Zomba, 1934), p. 5.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

and the case of administering groups with centralized authority. If he agrees, the necessary alteration is made in the tax-registers, and the new *Administrative* headman is paid his annuity and is called up by the District Commissioner whenever he holds a meeting. To the District Commissioner the chiefdom is made up of the villages on the tax-register, and in a situation of political importance he calls on the headmen of those villages for decisions. For example, when a chief was being installed, the District Commissioner called each *Administrative* headman forward and asked him whether he agreed to the succession. When the District Commissioner wishes to discuss any matter with a villager he calls forward the *Administrative* headman. The position of village headmen in the political structure becomes more effective after they have been recognized by Government.

I have no accurate measure of the proportion of all village headmen who are recognized by Government. From my records the percentage of *Administrative* village headmen out of the total of recognized village headmen is:

	No. Admin. Villages	% of Total recognized
Kawinga	160	84
Liwonde	104	71
Mpasa	30	48
Chikweo	48	43
Ngokwe	22	40
Chamba	62	39

I have full records for the smaller chiefdoms, Mpasa, Chikweo, Ngokwe and Chamba, but I know for certain that the figures for Kawinga and Liwonde are incomplete. My fullest and most reliable records are for Ngokwe and Chikweo, so that we may estimate roughly that less than half of the village headmen are *Administrative* village headmen.

Naturally the village headman, whose taxable population will be reduced by the granting of a new 'book', opposes this in the same way as his ancestor opposed the emigration of his village members in pre-White days. In 1947, in Jalasi's area for example, there was an argument hinging on this.

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622 554 691 Mlima was a village headman of long standing and had been recognized as an Administrative headman. Ngwaya was a headman who had come to settle under Mlima.[1] After some years Ngwaya felt that because he had his own village he should be given a 'book' and receive money from the Government. Mlima however resisted the claim, saying that his 'book' had been given to him by Jalasi. Both went to Jalasi's court so that the difference could be resolved. Jalasi rejected Ngwaya's claim and upbraided him for being recalcitrant. Ngwaya was fined 5s. and ordered to pay £1 to Mlima in compensation.

622 554 643 691 A rather more complex case brings out the position of the chief, the Administration and the conflict of the prestige-giving principles of historical primacy and White recognition.

In 1948, an Administrative village headman, Kalonga, from Nyambi's area, decided to migrate down to the more fertile land along the banks of the Shire River. This land was in Jalasi's area, and it was partially occupied by a minor village headman called Malilo. Kalonga had already selected his site for the village when Malilo came up to him and told him that he was the first in that area and that Kalonga should have asked him to indicate a building site. Kalonga, on the other hand, pointed out that he was an Administrative headman and that Malilo was not, and there the matter rested. In time Kalonga, because of his official position, became better known than Malilo. Malilo was jealous of this prestige and in due course went to Jalasi and complained that Kalonga was 'getting too big for his boots'[2] and that he was only a Newcomer into that area. Jalasi sent for Kalonga.

At the dispute in front of the chief, Malilo reiterated his complaint. Kalonga merely pointed out that Malilo was jealous of his 'book'. Jalasi dismissed the case reminding the two headmen that it was he who was chief of the country. Shortly after this, Kalonga went to Jalasi alone and told him that Malilo had told him that he, Jalasi, was no chief because he should have taken the 'book' and given it to Malilo. Jalasi said, 'It is impossible to change over the "books" which are written by the Whites', and then sent a messenger to bring Malilo to court. When he came he denied the tale and said that as far as he knew the only reason for Kalonga's animosity could be that he had refused to give him the *mbaye* greeting. Jalasi informed both headmen that they were to be independent of each other. Malilo

[1] *Kwakulipatika*—lit. one who had made himself a slave.

[2] *Kulikwenya*—reflexive causative of the verb *kukwela*, to climb, i.e. to cause oneself to climb or to exalt one's status.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

was to report strangers coming into his village area independently of Kalonga. Nowadays, there is much tension between the two headmen and they maneuvre each other to court on the slightest pretext. The peace is kept only by order of Jalasi. On the whole, however, it is Kalonga who has the higher status and superior prestige.

Unfortunately I have no figures to show how large a village becomes before its headman applies for Government recognition. The average number of tax-payers under village headmen who have just been granted 'books' might have provided this information, but I was unable to collect it. Formerly, they could become Administrative headmen only if they had more than 20 tax-payers under them. Nowadays, however, owing to differential fertility and the reduction in size of villages because of internal dissension, many of the Administrative villages (22 per cent) are smaller than the 20 tax-payer limit. They, however, retain their 'books'. I know that often within the Administrative villages of important headmen or chiefs, there are contained some minor villages bigger than some Administrative villages which are farther away. For example, in Chiwalo's own Administrative village, I know that the villages of Selemani, Ali Kasoka and Ntapasia are larger than many Administrative villages. It is not only the size of the village which allows a headman to apply for a 'book'. It is his relative status in the community. Men of higher rank than Selemani, Ali Kasoka and Ntapasia could probably approach Chiwalo and ask him for a 'book'. But these three are Newcomers. Selemani was a refugee from the Portuguese wars and went to live in Mlumbe area in Zomba district. He came to Chiwalo's area in about 1930. Ali Kasoka moved in about 1940. Ntapasia came about 1921. But they dare not approach Chiwalo himself to ask for a 'book'. Here Chiwalo's rôle of chief is compounded with his rôle of Administrative village headman so that they would be asking Chiwalo voluntarily to reduce the size of his Administrative village. It is only when their villages become conspicuously large that headmen may begin to force the chief's hand. They have always one sanction they can bring to bear on the chief—they can threaten to move out of his area into another chiefdom. The chief may not retain any of his subjects by force. If they express a wish to live in another chiefdom he cannot stop them. On the other hand, useful as this weapon

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

is when it is used by an Administrative village headman, as I shall illustrate later, it will not serve a minor village headman much to move out of one chiefdom to another if his object is to become recognized as an Administrative village headman. If he goes to another chiefdom he is automatically regarded as one of the most junior of the headmen. If he goes to another chiefdom as an Administrative village headman already, he takes with him his 'book' and to some extent the rank associated with it.

The size of Administrative villages as measured by the number of tax-payers in them is about equal in all three categories of village headmen. Table X sets out the distribution. The

TABLE X

DISTRIBUTION BY SIZE OF VILLAGES UNDER ABORIGINAL, INVADER AND NEWCOMER ADMINISTRATIVE HEADMEN

Tax-payers	Totals			Total	Percentages			Total
	Aborigines*	Invaders	Newcomers†		Aborigines	Invaders	Newcomers	
0–19	6	19	26	51	30·0	21·3	22·0	23·3
20–39	7	40	83	141	35·0	36·0	33·3	34·4
40–59	4	25	37	84	20·0	18·4	22·4	20·5
60–79	3	16	29	48	15·0	11·8	12·4	11·7
80–99	1	1	13	15	5·0	0·7	5·1	3·7
100–119	1	6	4	11	5·0	4·4	1·6	2·7
120–139	—	4	4	8	—	2·9	1·6	2·0
140–159	—	1	1	2	—	0·7	0·4	0·5
160–179	—	1	1	2	—	0·7	0·4	0·5
180–199	—	1	1	2	—	0·7	0·4	0·5
200–249	—	3	—	3	—	2·2	—	0·7
250–300	—	—	3	3	—	—	1·2	0·7
Totals .	20	136	254	410‡	100·0	99·8	100·0	100·1
Mean .	39·0	48·3	43·1	43·9				
S.E. .	8·7	4·0	2·8	2·3				

* Excludes one village whose size was unknown.
† Excludes 3 villages whose sizes were unknown.
‡ The total excludes an additional 10 villages for which full details were not recorded.

Administrative villages of the Aborigines, mostly Nyanja, appear to be rather smaller than those of the Invaders and Newcomers.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1969) 1956 FTT Tao FTT

Administrative headmen than either Christian or Pagan. The chiefs, of course, are all Moslem.

Lastly, the same trend is seen among those headmen who are of the same tribe as the chief, against those who are of other tribes (Table XIV). Here, however, the difference is so small

TABLE XIV

PROPORTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEADMEN AMONG ALL VILLAGE HEADMEN OF THE SAME TRIBE AS, OR DIFFERENT TRIBE FROM, THE CHIEF IN CERTAIN, NORTHERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AREAS

Type of Headman	Same Tribe	Different Tribe	Total
Administrative	83	63	130
Non-Administrative	78	71	149
Total	161	134	279
% Administrative Headmen .	51·6	47·1	50·6

$\alpha = 1$; $\chi^2 = 0.93$; $p = 0.3402$.

that it may easily have arisen by chance. These factors, however, do not operate independently. There are more co-tribesmen, co-religionists and relatives of the chief among the headmen than among the other categories. In other words, the factors are all intercorrelated and it is possible to consider any particular factor as the independent variable. From the point of view of the people themselves, to be an headman is to have one of the best claims on the chief to become an Administrative headman.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCARLET HEADBAND

Government recognition therefore provides the means whereby headmen are ranked in two major categories. But Administrative village headmen themselves are ranked by a number of prestige-indicating characteristics. The most important of these are the right to wear a plain scarlet headband and the right to hold boys' and girls' initiation ceremonies.

Of these two additional marks of rank the more important is the right to wear the scarlet headband. This headband is wrapped round the head, turban fashion. Most village headmen wear a headband of some sort, either of white or coloured cloth,

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FTT Yao FTT

(32, 55V 263. while most commoners do not. In Kawinga-Liwonde area, village headmen of high rank are entitled to wear a plain scarlet headband (*nkanjedi*). One informant suggested to me that the plain scarlet stands for blood, i.e. it indicates one of the most important elements in rank to-day—warrior ancestry. I do not know that this opinion is well supported. Among the 424 village headmen I enquired about, 24 or 5·7 per cent were entitled to this mark of honour. Of these, three were Aboriginal Nyanja headmen, 17 were Invaders, and only four were Newcomers. Of the four Newcomers, one had the right to hold it before he had come to the area from Portuguese East Africa and that was before the White conquest; one living in Chamba's area had brought it from Liwonde's area where he had been given the right to wear it; and the other two were in Chikowo's area and were given the right by the present Chikowo. The three Aboriginers who wear the scarlet headbands are Kanumba in Kawinga's area, and Mbera and Mbande in Mpono's area. All three are settled around the shores of Lake Shirwa and they are said to have been the original Nyanja chiefs in this area when the Yao invaded. These chiefs also have boys' and girls' initiation rights. The rank they hold in their own tribal communities is recognized by the Yao, who in any case ascribe superior status to the first-comers into an area. With the Nyanja chiefs the position became ambiguous. They had superior rank in that they were in occupation of the land before the Yao moved in. At the same time when they subjugated themselves to the Yao they accepted servility. Nowadays, the Nyanja are well integrated into the political life of the area and carry on their existence along the lake shores, still going to their traditional chief for the settlement of most of the cases not involving heavy compensation.

All Invader chieftains have scarlet headbands. Some of their direct relatives such as Stores, their clan relatives such as Nanzima and Mapunda, or their patrilateral relatives such as Cibwana Liwonde, the son of the first Liwonde, also have them. After these the next important group who are entitled to wear them are the *nduna*. Examples are Kangomba, Masinde and Cindamba in Kawinga's area and Makaca in Ngokwe area. The *nduna* are village headmen, usually unrelated to the chief, but who have been long associated with him, and who are his

2: Mitchell E-3 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

councillors. Long ago they held a most important position within the chiefdom. They were the loyal headmen and intimates of the chief, who could therefore be entrusted with the government of outer areas. They were posted to various parts of the chiefdom; kept the chief advised of war and attacks; maintained the peace among the village headmen in their areas; and collected the ivory to which the chief was entitled and sent it to him. Nowadays, the *ndunas* find themselves in competition with other officials who have arisen from the White Administrative system. The chief also finds advisers and councillors in his court clerks and his court sergeants, but the *ndunas* still have much prestige and advise and assist the chief in his administration of the area. Earlier, I mentioned that a senior headman was allowed to have a mat to himself, and only his own friends and people of his rank could occupy it with him. The only people in the chiefdom who could share the chief's mat, were the *ndunas*, and they called him *ungwaga* (my friend). Because the *ndunas* were not related to the chief they were in the peculiar position of being able to settle quarrels between the chief and his family: they were the arbitrators in arguments between the chief and his 'younger brothers' (junior male matrilineal relatives), or the chief and his wives. By Yao custom, rank is inherited by a village headman's successor, so that the relationship between the chief and his *ndunas* is perpetuated through successive incumbents. In Kwinga's area, for example, the *ndunas* to-day have the same name and the same relationship and relative position with regard to the chief as the *ndunas* who invaded the country nearly 100 years ago. This traditional ranking of village headmen emerges as soon as the Government alters its policy. Recently, when the idea of group headmen was reintroduced, the chief nominated the *ndunas* to become group headmen—a position not unlike that they held before the White conquest.

There is considerable difference between the size of Administrative villages under those headmen who have the right to wear the scarlet headband and those who have not. Table XV shows this clearly. The mean number of tax-payers under the former headmen is 80, while under the latter it is only 38. Among the village headmen with the right to wear the scarlet headband 62·5 per cent had villages of more than 60 tax-payers, while among other headmen only 25·0 per cent of the villages were in

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

TABLE XV

SIZE OF ADMINISTRATIVE VILLAGES UNDER HEADMEN WITH SCARLET HEADBANDS AND THOSE WITHOUT

No. of Tax-payers	Without Scarlet Headband	With Scarlet Headband	Total	% Headmen with S.H.
Under 40	215	7	232	3·0
40–79	125	7	132	5·3
80–119	23	3	26	11·5
120–159	6	2	8	25·0
160 and over	7	5	12	41·7
Total	386	24	410*	5·9

Combining villages of more than 80 tax-payers.

$z = 2.1$; $S^2 = 24.36$; $p < 0.0001$.

* Excludes 4 villages in which the numbers of tax-payers were unknown.

this category.[1] The village headmen who are entitled to wear the scarlet headband are mainly invaders and people of high rank. Their villages are large because of their rank as well as vice versa.

I have never heard of a village headman's wearing a scarlet headband without the chief's permission, and I am not sure what sanctions the chief would apply to prevent it. I have heard men say that village headmen who are not entitled to wear it do so if they live far away, but take it off when they come near the chief's court. However, this was only in casual conversation and I did not have an opportunity to check it. From the point of view of the people the right is so bound up with traditional status that it is almost inconceivable that the custom should be flouted. As we have seen, among the Newcomers only two have been given the right within the last 30 years.

Yet the significance of the scarlet headband differs considerably from area to area. In Malemia and in Jalasi areas the custom seems either to have fallen away or never to have existed. In Jalasi area Islam may have some effect. In Malemia area the majority are Christians and most headmen have taken to

[1] Diff. of per cent = 37·5; S.E. of diff. = 9·77; C.R. = 3·83; $p = 0.0001$.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT? Yao FT?

European-type clothing. In Nyambi area, abutting on Kawinga-Liwonde area in the north, there are 12 Administrative village headmen out of 37 who are entitled to the scarlet headband (32 per cent). For the Kawinga-Liwonde area the percentage is 37. An informant explained why a large proportion of headmen in Nyambi area had the right to wear the headband: 'The old Nyambis and the present one do not care. If a man has many lions, and if he says that his uncle had a scarlet headband, then he is given one too.' Even within the Kawinga-Liwonde area there is some variation in the number of headmen who are entitled to the scarlet headband. The following table sets this out.

Chiefdom	Total Admin. Headmen	% Scarlet Headbands
Kawinga	160	37
Liwonde	114	48
Mpasa	30	100
Chikweo	48	84
Ngokwe	21	100
Chimbe	61	49

Mpasa area near Lake Chirwa shows such a high proportion because of the Nyanja ex-chiefs who are entitled to the scarlet headband. Chikweo and Ngokwe on the other hand are the Mpezeni chiefs and seem to have taken the same attitude as Nyambi and his predecessors. In contrast to the statement about Nyambi, one Administrative headman in Mpasa's area said: 'The chief's scarlet band is good enough for us all. If each had one it would be too gaudy!'

The Struggle for Initiation Rights

Village headmen are generally outside competition for the right to wear the scarlet headband. These rights have been established largely by ancient custom and are almost confined to the Invaders or to those who have had them before they came into the area. The competition for initiation rights, however, goes on steadily. H. L. Duff had noticed this as early as 1906.[1] Newcomers may approach the chief and agitate for the rights,

[1] See p. 81.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

(22) growing their claims on many grounds. They may stress that they have a large village under them and that they have many children to initiate, and argue that their villages are far away from the nearest headman who has these rights. Or they may use their rank and connection with the chief. If all else fails they may threaten to move to another chiefdom. Punya threatened to do this.

(23) In 1947, Punya, an Administrative village headman in Chiwalo area, had 43 tax-payers under him and thought that he should have initiation rights. He had come to Chiwalo's in 1933 after the village had split in Chikowe's area near Zomba. He had relatives in Kapalowa's village in Chiwalo's area. He argued with Chiwalo that his uncle had had initiation rights. Chiwalo on the other hand, argued that Punya village was so close to his own—a matter of under a mile—that he could not consider it. This argument went on for some months. Eventually Punya told the chief that he was going to leave his area. Chiwalo then consented to some extent and offered Punya the permission to use the *dipate* basket, that is, the right to conduct girls' initiation ceremonies. Punya, after consulting his elders, took this and was satisfied.

But the chief is not always cowed by the threat to leave his area. He is sometimes able to draw on his official position to control his headmen. The argument between Makata and Ntimbuka illustrates this very well.

Makata was an Administrative headman of some standing in Chiwalo's area. He had been one of the invading headmen and was entitled to wear the scarlet headband. In 1947, he had 101 tax-payers under him and had been given the right to hold boys' and girls' initiation ceremonies at least 30 years ago. Ntimbuka on the other hand was a comparative newcomer. He came from Kawinga's area in about 1930. He is of Nyanja stock but has adopted the Yao language and customs. His village in 1947 had 23 tax-payers and was about 300 yards from Makata's. Early in 1947, Ntimbuka started quarrelling with Makata about the right to boys' initiation ceremonies. He felt that he ought to have rights as well as Makata. Eventually he told Makata that he would refuse to take the boys to his initiation ceremonies. Seething with discontent Ntimbuka went to complain about Makata to Chiwalo, and told him that he had had an argument with Makata and that he was going to leave the area because of it. Chiwalo called Makata and asked him what the trouble was. Makata told Chiwalo that Ntimbuka was jealous of the basket. Chiwalo

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 ??? Too ???

then told Nimbuka that he could not give a sacrifice leader to him because his village was so close to Makura's. Nimbuka was not satisfied with this and continued agitating. Chiwalo, at last exasperated, threatened Nimbuka that if he had any more trouble he would send him to Kowinga to be dealt with. Kowinga of course is the Native Authority in the area and holds the power of arresting headmen under Section 12 of the Ordinance. Nimbuka was duly cowed by this threat and meekly agreed to send his boys to Makura's initiation ceremonies.

Chiwalo had to support Makura against Nimbuka. Makura was a powerful headman: he had rank from his descent and a large village under him. Nimbuka was a Newcomer and he had only a fifth of the followers that Makura had. If it meant losing followers it was better to lose the smaller village. As it was Chiwalo could use the power of the White Administration to keep Nimbuka within his area and yet keep him subservient.

A Newcomer is unlikely to be given both boys' and girls' initiation rights. He is more likely to be able to get only one of the rights. Table XVI sets out the number of headmen in

TABLE XVI

NUMBERS OF HEADMEN HOLDING BOYS' AND GIRLS' INITIATION RIGHTS AMONG ABORIGINES, INVADERS AND NEWCOMERS HEADMEN

Type of Initiation Right	Aborigines	Invaders	Newcomers	Total
Both boys' and girls' init. rights	—	17	14	31
Boys' init. rights only	1	6	10	17
Girls' init. rights only	1	11	31	44
No init. rights	16	84	158	258
Total	18	119	213	350*
% Init. holders	11·3	29·4	21·7	26·3

Combining Aboriginal and Invader totals.

$\alpha = 31 \quad \beta^0 = 648 \; ; \quad p = 0{\cdot}02354.$

* Total excludes the 24 headmen who have the right to wear the scarlet headband.

each category who hold initiation ceremonies. While more Invaders have the right to both ceremonies the proportion holding

2: Mitchell E-S (1946-1965) 1156 F27 Yao F27

only one is roughly the same.[1] A Newcomer may approach the chief and ask for initiation rights in certain circumstances only. In general, these are that his village is a very large one, that he had the rights in the area from which he has just come, and/or that he is living in so isolated a part that it would be a hardship for his children to go to the nearest other headman who holds the rights; but he may press his claim if he is related to the chief and can approach him as a kinsman.

There is little doubt that the rights are closely associated with the size of the villages:

TABLE XVIb

Initiation Rights among Invaders and Newcomers Headmen who have Villages with more and less than 60 Taxpayers

(The figures in brackets are percentages)

Type of Init. Right	Over 60		Under 60		Total
	Invaders	Newcomers	Invaders	Newcomers	
Both Init. rights . .	10 (32·3)	9 (30·0)	7 (10·4)	5 (16·1)	31 (100·0)
Boys' Init. rights only .	2 (10·4)	5 (27·3)	4 (23·5)	5 (27·3)	18 (100·0)
Girls' Init. rights only .	2 (4·8)	13 (31·0)	10 (23·8)	17 (40·4)	42 (100·0)*
No Init. rights	9 (23·1)	28 (9·3)	73 (26·8)	170 (60·7)	280 (100·0)†
Total . .	23 (8·1)	55 (14·4)	96 (26·0)	197 (53·4)	369 (100·0)

$\alpha = 3.8$; $\chi^2 = 37.98$; $p < 0.0001$.

* Excludes 1 village whose size was unknown.
† Excludes 2 villages whose sizes were unknown.
‡ Combining Invader and Newcomer groups.

[1] Invaders with both initiation rights (17 of 119) = 14·3 per cent; Newcomers with both initiation rights (14 of 251) = 5·5 per cent; Diff. of per cent = 8·8; S.E. of diff. = 3·07; C.R. = 2·85; $p = 0.0044$.

Invaders with rights to only one of the initiations (18 of 119) = 15·1 per cent; Newcomers with rights to only one of the initiations (41 of 251) = 16·2 per cent.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Tao FT7

TABLE XVIB

INITIATION RIGHTS AMONG INVADER AND NEWCOMER HEADMEN WHO HAVE VILLAGES WITH MORE AND LESS THAN 60 TAX-PAYERS
(Arranged to hold the influence of village size fixed)

Type of Headman	Over 60		Under 60		Total
	Init.	No Init.	Init.	No Init.	
Invaders . .	14 (12·8)	9 (7·6)	21 (17·6)	75 (63·0)	119 (100·0)
Newcomers . .	27 (10·8)	26 (10·4)	27 (10·8)	170 (68·0)	250 (100·0)
Total . .	41 (11·1)	35 (9·5)	48 (13·0)	245 (66·4)	369 (100·0)

$\alpha = 3.1$; $\chi^2 = 3.96$; $p = 0.0465$.

Among all headmen (Table XVIa):

19 of 31 headmen who hold both initiation rights have villages with more than 60 tax-payers . . . . . = 61·3%
7 of 16 headmen who hold only the boys' initiation rights have villages with more than 60 tax-payers . . . . . = 43·7%
13 of 42 headmen who hold only the girls' initiation rights have villages of more than 60 tax-payers . . . . . = 31·7%
35 of 280 headmen who hold no initiation rights have villages with more than 60 tax-payers . . . . . = 12·5%

When the influence of village-size is held constant the advantages of Invaders over Newcomers in the competition for initiation rights is discernible, but the differences are so small that they are of doubtful significance (Table XVIIb).

14 of 23 Invader headmen with villages over 60 tax-payers have initiation rights . . . . . = 60·9%
27 of 53 non-Invader headmen with villages over 60 tax-payers have initiation rights . . . . . = 50·9%
21 of 96 Invader headmen with villages less than 60 tax-payers have initiation rights . . . . . = 21·9%
27 of 197 non-Invader headmen with villages less than 60 tax-payers have initiation rights . . . . . = 13·7%

As we may anticipate, relationship with the chief is an important factor in the competition for initiation rights. Among the chief's direct and clan relatives for example, 36·4 per cent (51 of 140) hold initiation rights, but only 16·8 per cent (39 of

2: Mitchell E-S (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

TABLE XVIII

Initiation Rights amongst Invaders and Newcomers Headmen who are Related and Unrelated to the Chief

Type of Initiation Holders	Invaders				Newcomers				Total
	D	C	N	T	D	C	N	T	
Both init. rights	3	8	4	17	0	3	0	14	31
Boys' init. rights only	6	6	9	6	1	1	1	10	16
Girls' init. rights only	3	3	0	10	0	10	14	37	47
No init. rights . .	26	23	33	84	13	27	180	198	282
Total	38	40	47	119	22	41	195	253	375
% Init. holders .	32·6	40·0	34·0	29·4	38·1	39·0	19·4	21·7	24·3

D = Direct relatives; C = Clan relatives; N = Non-relatives; T = Total.

Combining Invader and Newcomer totals.

$\alpha = 6$; $\chi^2 = 20{\cdot}24$; $p = 0{\cdot}00112$.

231) of his non-relatives hold them[1] (Table XVIII). There is a slightly greater proportion of the clan relatives holding initiation rights than direct kinsmen, but the difference is insignificant.[2] Slightly more of the chief's relatives among the Newcomers hold initiation rights than those among the Invaders,[3] but once again the difference is so small that it might easily have arisen by chance. A much greater proportion of Invaders is related to the chief than of Newcomers,[4] so that among the Invaders the relative advantage of their kinship with the chief, as against the unrelated, is somewhat reduced. There are very many Invaders who can claim kinship with the chief in their struggle for initiation rights. Among the Newcomers, conversely, because there

[1] Diff. of per cent = 19·6; S.E. of diff. = 4·58; C.R. = 4·28; $p = 0{\cdot}00002$.

[2] Direct relatives (20 of 59) = 33·9 per cent; Clan relatives (31 of 81) = 38·2 per cent; Diff. of per cent = 4·3; S.E. of diff. = 8·2; C.R. = 0·52; $p = 0{\cdot}6030$.

[3] Newcomers (24 of 62) = 38·7 per cent; Invaders (27 of 78) = 34·6 per cent; Diff. of per cent = 4·1; S.E. of diff. = 8·2; C.R. = 0·5; $p = 0{\cdot}6170$.

[4] Excluding those entitled to wear the scarlet headband. Invaders (78 of 119) = 65·6 per cent; Newcomers (62 of 253) = 24·5 per cent.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Tao FT7

are so few of the chief's kinsmen among them, to be related to the chief is a distinct advantage in this struggle.

I recorded the origin of the initiation rights of only 38 of the 55 Newcomer headmen who hold them, excluding those who also have the right to wear the scarlet headband. Table XIX sets out these data. We cannot put too much reliance on these

TABLE XIX

THE ORIGIN OF INITIATION RIGHTS OF SOME NEWCOMER HEADMEN

Type of Initiation Rights	Given by Chief of present residential dictrict	Brought from elsewhere	Total	% Brought in
Both init. rights . .	8	5	13	38
Boys' init. rights only .	9	0	9	0
Girls' init. rights only .	13	1	16	6
Total	30	6	38	16

figures because they cover only about three-quarters of the village headmen in this category, and these, moreover, were not randomly selected. As they stand, the figures support my earlier conclusion that Newcomers are more likely to obtain rights for only one initiation ceremony, than for both together. While 38·5 per cent (5 of 13) of the village headmen who hold both initiation ceremonies had brought in their rights with them from outside, only 4·0 per cent (1 of 25) of those who hold only one of the rights had done so.[1] An analysis of the periods when headmen were given their rights reveals consistent results.

From Table XX we see that:

Of 11 Invaders who hold rights to both initiation ceremonies, recent chiefs granted 3 . . . . . = 27·3%

Of 8 Newcomers who hold rights to both initiation ceremonies, recent chiefs granted 2 . . . . . = 25·0%

Of 12 Invaders who hold rights to only one of the initiation ceremonies, recent chiefs granted 3 . . . . . = 25·0%

Of 24 Newcomers who hold rights to only one of the initiation ceremonies, recent chiefs granted 14 . . . . . = 58·3%

[1] Diff. of per cent = 34·5; S.E. of diff. = 12·47; C.R. = 2·77; $p = 0.0056$.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1945-1949) 1956 FTT Tue FTT

TABLE XX

Where Initiation Rights were Granted to Newcomers and Invaders

Type of Initiation Rights	By early Chiefs		By recent Chiefs*		Total
	Invaders	Newcomers	Invaders	Newcomers	
Both init. . .	8	6	3	0	17
One init. only .	9	10	3	14	36
Total . . .	17	16	6	14	53

* This is obviously a crude classification. I have taken roughly 11 years as the dividing line. As the early chiefs I have classified all the Kwengas before and including Kwenga V who died in 1913; all the Liwandes before and including Liwande III who died in 1911; all the Ngokwens before and including Ngokwe IV who died in 1913; all the Mpezes before and including Mpeze II who died in 1913; and all the Chikwens before and including Chikwen II who died in 1914.

In other words, recent chiefs have been granting single initiation rights to invaders in the same proportion as they have been granting both rights, but they have been granting Newcomer headmen the right to hold only one ceremony more often than the right to hold both. Of the six sets of rights to initiation ceremonies granted by recent chiefs to invader headmen, three were rights to hold only one ceremony, while 14 of the 16 initiation rights granted to Newcomer headmen were for one ceremony only.[1]

Headmen do not make use of their bonds of common religion or tribe with the chief in their competition for initiation rights. Table XXI sets out the numbers of headmen of different religion. There is a substantially smaller proportion of Pagan headmen (9·7 per cent) holding initiation ceremonies than either Christians (25·5 per cent) or Moslems (24·4 per cent).[2] Most Pagans, however, are also Newcomers so that this difference is actually a reflex of the generally lower rank of Newcomers. Table XXII sets out the number of headmen of the chief's tribe and of other

[1] i.e. 30·0 per cent against 87·5 per cent; diff. of per cent = 57·5; S.E. of diff. = 20·08; C.R. = 1·87; $p = 0{\cdot}0614$.

[2] Pagans = 9·7 per cent; Others 24·6 per cent; diff of per cent = 14·9; S.E. of diff. = 7·94; C.R. = 1·88; $p = 0{\cdot}0603$.

J: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1965) 1956 FT7 Tao FT7

TABLE XXI

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INITIATION RIGHTS AMONG HEADMEN OF DIFFERENT RANKING

Type of Initiation Holder	Headmen	Christian	Pagan	Total
Both init. rights . .	50	6	1	57*
Boys' init. rights only .	10	4	—	18
Girls' init. rights only .	31	6	3	40†
No init. rights . . .	111	41	18	169‡
Total	170	57	31	263

$n = 6$; $\chi^2 = 3.03$; $p = 0.33778$.

* Excludes 1 headmen whose religion was unrecorded.
† Excludes 4 headmen whose religion was unrecorded.
‡ Excludes 2 headmen whose religion was unrecorded.

TABLE XXII

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INITIATION RIGHTS AMONG HEADMEN OF THE SAME AND DIFFERENT TRIBE AS THE CHIEF

Type of Initiation Holder	Same Tribe	Different Tribe	Total
Both init. holders	20	11	31
Boys' init. holders only . . .	7	9	16
Girls' init. holders only . . .	23	20	43
No init. rights	136	126	262
Total	206	166	372
% Init. holders	34·1	34·1	34·1

$n = 3$; $\chi^2 = 2.17$; $p = 0.54169$.

tribes who hold initiation rights. Once again the proportion of headmen of the same tribe as the chief who hold initiation rights is the same as that of headmen of different tribes from the chief. We may say, therefore, that membership of tribe is not an operative factor in the granting of initiation rights.[1]

[1] The factors contributing to the granting of initiation rights are obviously all intercorrelated.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT? Yao FT?

622. The right to hold initiation ceremonies may be held concurrently with the right to wear a scarlet headband. For purposes of analysis thus far, I have treated the holding of initiation ceremonies separately. By common consensus, the wearing of this headband is an indicator of much greater rank than the holding of initiation ceremonies. The highest ranking headmen, like the chiefs, usually have the right to wear the scarlet headband together with the rights to both initiation ceremonies. In order to show how rank varies among the main categories of village headmen I have devised a numerical

TABLE XXIII

MEANS OF RANK AMONG ADMINISTRATIVE VILLAGE HEADMEN

Type of Headman	With Headband				Without Headband				Total
	Both	Boys only	Girls only	No rights	Both	Boys only	Girls only	No rights	
Aborigines:									
Direct rel.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	2
Clan rel.	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
No rel. .	3	—	—	—	—	1	1	13	17
Total .	3	—	—	—	—	1	1	16	21
Invaders:									
Direct rel.	8	1	—	—	5	2	3	26	47
Clan rel.	4	—	—	—	8	2	3	27	44
No rel. .	3	—	—	1	4	2	2	33	45
Total .	15	1	—	1	17	6	11	84	136
Newcomers:									
Direct rel.	1	—	—	—	2	1	5	13	21
Clan rel.	—	1	1	—	3	1	12	25	43
No rel. .	1	—	—	1	9	8	14	160	193
Total .	1	1	1	1	14	10	31	198	257
Grand total	19	2	1	2	31	17	44	298	414

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Tao FT7

system of ranking. I have assumed that the rarer the mark of rank the higher the rank it indicates. Table XXIII sets out the incidence of marks of rank among the 414 Administrative village headmen for whom I have recorded the data. In all, there were 24 headmen with scarlet headbands, 69 with boys' initiation ceremonies and 93 with girls' initiation ceremonies. I have given the holding of a scarlet headband the value of the reciprocal of the proportion of village headmen who hold that right, i.e. $414/24 = 17.3$.

The value of holding a boys' initiation ceremony by the same procedure is: $414/69 = 6.0$.

The value of holding a girls' initiation ceremony is: $414/93 = 4.4$.

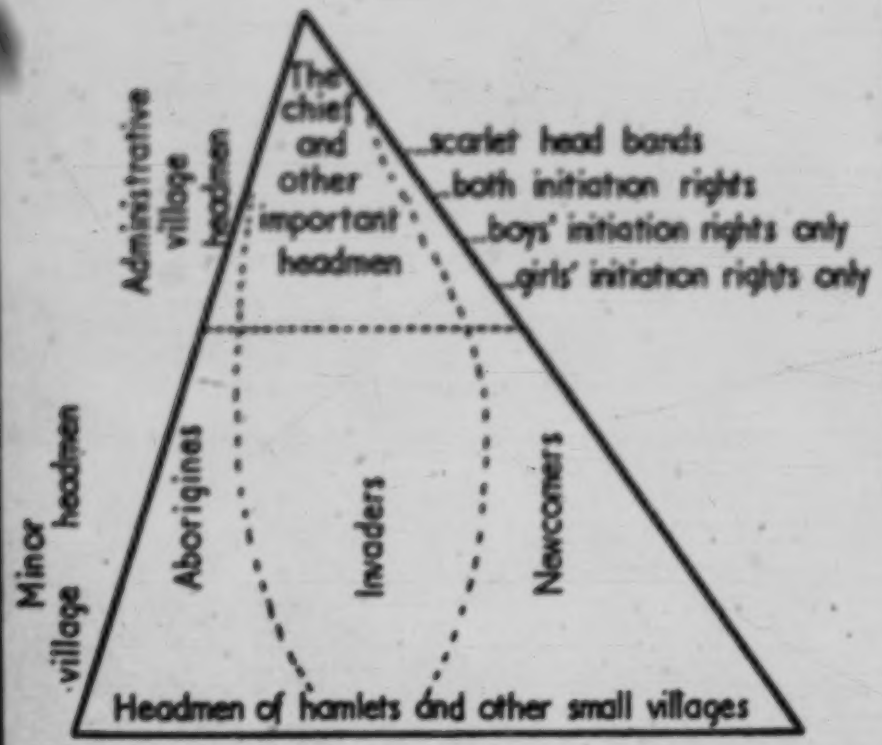

Diagram 2. Paradigm of the Political Structure.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

The value of holding the various combinations of rights then are these:

Scarlet headband and both initiation ceremonies	= 27·7
Scarlet headband and boys' initiation ceremony	= 23·3
Scarlet headband and girls' initiation ceremony	= 21·7
Scarlet headband alone	= 17·3
Both initiation ceremonies	= 10·4
Boys' initiation ceremony only	= 6·0
Girls' initiation ceremony only	= 4·4

We may now score the rank of headmen within any particular category by estimating the percentage score from a possible. For example, the score of the rank among Aboriginal headmen would be:

3 × 27·7 = 83·1
1 × 6·0 = 6·0
1 × 4·4 = 4·4
93·5 (expressed as a percentage of 21 × 27·7 = 16·1)

Using this method I have set out in Table XXIV the rank scores for headmen in the categories in Table XXIII. Table XXIV shows that on the whole ranking among the Invader

TABLE XXIV

RANK SCORES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE VILLAGE HEADMEN OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

Aborigines:		
Chief's direct relatives	0	
Chief's clan relatives	30·0	
Chief's non-relatives	14·0	
All Aborigines		16·1
Invaders:		
Chief's direct relatives	25·4	
Chief's clan relatives	18·7	
Chief's non-relatives	13·1	
All Invader headmen		19·2
Newcomers:		
Chief's direct relatives	8·4	
Chief's clan relatives	11·3	
Chief's non-relatives	4·6	
All Newcomer headmen		6·1
All chief's direct relatives		19·6
All chief's clan relatives		15·8
All chief's non-relatives		6·8

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

headmen is higher than among the Aborigines or the Newcomers. It also shows quite clearly that the chief's direct relatives hold more of the privileges associated with rank than his clan relatives do, and they in turn hold more than his non-relatives.

The Political Process as a Struggle of Headmen Against the Chief

Modern chiefdoms appear to be organized on essentially the same principles as those described by Duff MacDonald. A chiefdom is headed by a chief and under him his subjects are organized in villages. Each village is represented by a headman, who stands in a relationship to the chief and to other village headmen, according to the prestige of the group he represents. This prestige is determined partly by his historical association with the chief in his past military exploits, partly by the size of his village, and partly by the prestige he has had in other areas. These elements were significant in Yao polity before the advent of the Whites, as we have seen from Duff MacDonald's description. Village headmen then were continually involved in a struggle for power among themselves and against the chief.[1] The struggle for power among village headmen continues to-day though in a changed context. Military power is no longer the object of the competition between them: the struggle for followers has become transmuted into a struggle for tax-payers. In harmony with the new political and economic situation a successful headman is not rewarded by military superiority, but by Government recognition and an official emolument.

At the same time, the chief whose power in the pre-White days resided in his armed forces, nowadays draws on the power of the White Administration to exercise his authority over his village headmen. His position is strengthened by Government decree and he does not hesitate to threaten to use it if necessary. Although the prestige of chiefs is higher than that of any of the village headmen, the difference in prestige between any chief and his most important headman is not very great. They are treated with almost the same deference by the minor village headmen and commoners, and they are referred to by the same term (*mwenye* = chief). The chief or an important village headman

[1] See Chap. II, p. 34.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

The chief or an important village headman

[601] is usually addressed by a kinship term, either *baba* (father) or 643 *ambuje* (master or grandparent). When he is referred to, his 622 name is not used. Village headmen are owners or wardens of 554 villages (*aryene misi*) but only those headmen of some standing 178 are referred to as *mwenye*.

643 Important village headmen, like the chief, are in mystical 622 danger from pollution by death. They cannot come to the hut in 554 which a corpse is lying; and they cannot eat the chicken which 761 has been brought to them by relatives of the deceased to announce the death. Like the chief too, an important headman may be buried in a tomb in his village and not in the graveyard.

643 But an important element in their relationship nowadays is 622 that the Administration will support the chief against a village 554 headman when it comes to a trial of strength, and that a headman 578 these days is precluded by modern conditions from setting up 691 chiefdoms as he did in the old days. Village headmen therefore must struggle for power against their fellows and the chief within the modern Administrative framework. Some attempts are made to resist the power of the chief but these are rarely successful. The dispute between Liwonde and Ndenda illustrates this.

Ndenda was an Nguru headman, who in 1947 had 284 tax-payers under him (Liwonde, the chief, had 186 in his village). Ndenda had come into Liwonde's area before the White invasion and had surrendered with his relative Mlelemba, to Liwonde. The second Liwonde had given him both initiation rights but, unlike his relative, he did not have the right to wear a scarlet headband.

In 1938 or thereabouts, Liwonde decided to move his village site from the Shire River to its present site about half-way up the Great Rift scarp. He sent two of his young men to look for a suitable site, and to plant some mango trees there when they had found one. Ndenda heard of this and sent one of his men to take Liwonde's men into custody. He took their hoes away and then told them to go back to tell the chief they were planting in his (Ndenda's) land. In due course Liwonde moved up to his new site, and asked Ndenda why he had taken the hoes away and whether he owned the country, i.e. was the chief. Ndenda now argued that Mlelemba's ancestors had been given the rights of chieftainship over this area and that the first Mlelemba in the area had given Liwonde some elephant tusks for these rights. Liwonde replied that the chief has a right to tusks and that many had given tusks to him but were not entitled for that reason to rights of chieftainship. Liwonde handled this situation by calling a meeting of the village headmen in the area. They assembled

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

and the claims of Ndenda were debated. The headmen supported Liwonde in his claim that the tusks were part of the chief's rights and that when Mlelemba had come he had come 'to get fire from the chief'. Liwonde then upbraided Ndenda for imagining that because he had so many followers he was a chief, and fined him 10s. for being insolent.

The struggle between Liwonde and Ndenda did not end however. Some years afterwards a man came to Liwonde and said that he wanted to live in his area. This man was a complete stranger and had no relatives there. Liwonde sent him to Ndenda's village. Later while living in the village, this man stole some cloth. He was arrested and Ndenda brought him to the chief saying that the chief was responsible for him. Liwonde told Ndenda that he was being insolent again and that the responsibility must rest with him because the man had married into his village. He ordered Ndenda to pay £1 to compensate the victims of the theft. This Ndenda did but in his view this was tantamount to being chased out of the chief's area. He therefore moved with his children across the boundary northwards into Jalasi's area, and told his unrelated villagers to follow him. They refused to leave Liwonde's area. He was helpless and could do nothing about it. He returned to Liwonde's area a broken man and died shortly afterwards. His eldest son took charge of the village affairs, but so far no successor has been found.

The struggle between Ndenda and Liwonde has some interesting features about it. The strength of the chief in his Government position is not as evident as it has been in other struggles, as, for example, between Jalasi and Kalonga, or between Chiwalo and Ntimbuka, in the cases I cited earlier.[1] It appears only indirectly. Ndenda did not appeal to the District Commissioner against the fine as he might have done if he had felt his position to be more secure. The case history also shows how Liwonde ranged his other important headmen, 47 per cent of whom were kinsmen or co-Invaders, around him against Ndenda who was neither. It shows also that Ndenda's reaction to what he felt to be an injustice, typically enough, was to emigrate and to try to injure the chief by reducing his followers. When this failed he was defeated and it was his downfall, for, like a chief, 'a headman without people is nothing'.[2]

[1] Pp. 86 and 96.

[2] *Mulamba napa nganakola ilunda ngawa mulamba*: 'A chief who has no people is not a chief'—a saying frequently quoted to emphasize the dependence of the chief on his subjects.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

622 who are sexually inactive from contracting *ndaka*.[1] At the same
621 time the headman gives each household a piece of the fire which
751 has been newly kindled in the traditional way by rubbing two sticks together.

834 The mystical danger inherent in the act of setting up a new
372 village is well brought out in the propitiatory prayer and the abstinence from sexual intercourse. Once again it is the village headman who must make the offering to his ancestors; and it is
[833] the village headman who has intercourse with his wife so that the effluvium from his sexual activity may permeate the medicine in the hut and so protect the villagers from *ndaka*. Lastly, it is very important that the whole village cooks and is warmed by one fire. 'We are of one fire' expresses the common origin of two villages; though in fact every time a new village is founded a new fire should be kindled. To bring fire from the village of origin is to bring sorcery, since the Yao believe that sorcery can operate between persons closely linked by kinship only. To have one's own fire is to be autonomous from other groups.

The Burdens and Rewards of Headmanship

622 MacDonald had the perspicuity to see not only that the village
654 headman was the representative of a corporate group and that he represented this group to outsiders, but also that he represented external authority to his villagers. The village
[769] headman who in his person stood for the unity of the group, performed certain ritual acts which emphasized this, such as praying to the village ancestors. In spite of the decline of the ritual his position is still regarded as exceptional. Much, however, depends on the rank of the village headman. There may not be much difference in ritual observances and mystical dangers between a headman who has in his charge a meagre three or four huts, and a commoner. In the larger and more important

[753] [1] This is one of the most important mystical concepts of the Yao. I have described this condition and its implications more fully in *Marriage among the Machinga Yao of Southern Nyasaland* (R.-L.I. Paper), forthcoming. Briefly it is a disease characterized by œdema which affects those who are sexually inactive when they are suddenly brought into contact with a person, or an object which he has touched, after having intercourse. The people most affected are the
[833] young and the old, i.e. those who cannot have sexual intercourse. Those who are capable of intercourse are expected to have ritual intercourse with a stranger, and so fortify themselves against this dread disease.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

villages, however, the headman's activities may be as circumscribed by ritual prohibitions as the chief's are.

The village headman is subject not only to mystical dangers but also to other dangers deriving from his position of authority. It is significant that villagers never go to a diviner to find out the cause of a village headman's death. When I asked informants why this was so, they said, 'Well, what's the use of it? He has enemies on all sides in the village who are trying to kill him with their magic.' In harmony with this view of village headmanship, the symbolic object which represents the village headman in the diviners' gourds I have seen, is a small ring of grass (*singwa*), a copy of the grass cushion women place on their heads when they are carrying loads. This symbolizes the ring of enemies which surrounds the village headman. The saying 'the tortoise defecates on the one who carries it',[1] usually applied to chieftainship, applies equally well to a village headman.

A village headman may expect little material benefit from his position of authority. If he is an Administrative village headman he may be paid a small annuity of 5*s.* or 10*s.*[2] Returning labour migrants may give him a blanket or a military overcoat, or perhaps a few shillings, but this is not usual. If he is not a strict Moslem he will almost certainly be given a pot of beer from every brewing made for sale in the local 'club house'. On the other hand, if an important stranger, particularly a White official, arrives in the village he feels he must give his guest a chicken. It is mannerly to reciprocate with another gift, but not all Whites know this, or, if they do, do not observe it. In particular if the chief comes to his village, he will be expected to entertain him and here can expect no recompense—the chief 'eats from his country'.

The Yao know that the position of headman is no sinecure. Frequently the one chosen to succeed refuses to accept the position, especially if he is well placed in employment. It is significant that the word for an heir is *litegwa*[3]—the one who is trapped. An

[1] *Ngonjo jikunyela nnyene iwajigele.*

[2] Until recently this was true. As I was leaving the field in 1949, I heard that the Administration had decided to abandon this system in favour of one in which only group headmen would be remunerated.

[3] Substantive form of the passive of the verb *kutega*—to set a trap as for animals. This word is not widely known, especially among the younger Yao.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

622 554 heir has to balance up the difficulties inherent in his position of leadership, including his fear of sorcery, with its honour and rank.

Commoners respect village headmen in the same way as minor headmen respect their superiors. Headmen of important villages are given a special greeting by the commoners; they usually wear a distinguishing headdress; they sit on a mat alone or on a chair, while the commoners sit on the floor; they walk in front of commoners on the road; they sit under the chief's verandah while the commoners sit in the sun; and they are buried in the village, while the unimportant commoners are buried in the graveyard.

Outside their villages too they are accorded deference. It is not only their own villagers who must treat them in this way: all commoners must do so. They are accepted by the chief as important men and are treated as such.

The Headman's Installation Ceremony

622 The peculiar position of the village headman is brought out particularly in the installation ceremonies. When a headman dies his heir should not assume the name until he has been formally installed. This is expressed as 'to enter the name' (*kwinjila lina*). All installation ceremonies are similar and there are only minor variations from one ceremony to another. The following is a description of a succession ceremony recounted to me by an informant. It concerns the succession to headmanship of Cimombo, a headman of some rank in Nyambi's area. Cimombo had a village of 30 tax-payers, wore a scarlet headband, and had the right to hold a girls' but not a boys' initiation ceremony.

Some time had passed since the death of Cimombo, and his heir, though commonly known by that name, had not been officially installed. Eventually he grew impatient and went to his perpetual [1] elder brother Kaukutu of Nyambi's area, who also wore a scarlet headband, and told him that he was going to Cholo to find work. Kaukutu told him that he might visit the men at Cholo but he himself must not enter employment there. The heir left for Cholo. As soon as he had gone Kaukutu collected his relatives and discussed the succession. They decided to get

[1] The relationship between some personalities in the social structure, originally kinsmen, becomes fixed and is perpetuated by their successors. See p. 122.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

613 he cannot escape the fact that in his wife's village he is only
593 a 'billy goat' and that his 'true home' is in his matrilineal
606 village. The pull of the matrilineal village on him, therefore,
591 is always very strong and he is constantly trying to return there.
621 His wife's responsible relatives are constantly trying to avoid this because they know that in time they are likely to lose the children who will probably settle in their father's village if they grow up there. In general, therefore, a husband must have a very good reason before he can get his wife's kinsmen's permission to take her and her children to his village. His wife's relatives do not easily yield. But a headman must live in his own village so that nearly all headmen bring at least one of their wives into their villages. Other men sometimes succeed in doing so especially if their wives are past child-bearing, but it is typically the headman's wife who lives virilocally.

621 The husband's interest in returning to his matrilineal village
591 is heightened by the fact that a man in his wife's village is looked
554 upon as the typical man without prestige: a stranger, whose duty is largely procreative. The theme song at the installation ceremony where the husband was compared with a billy goat, and the common epithet 'chicken rooster' for a husband, reflect the attitude of the Yao towards him. In the song I quoted, the husband was said to be unable to climb high in his village of marriage, however rich he may become.[1] He is, nevertheless, an essential member of the village and the Yao say that it can succeed neither economically nor physically without his aid.

A husband becomes more important when he stays in a village for a long time. He becomes known intimately to the villagers and is conversant with their affairs. He is, therefore, able to advise on many private intra-lineage and intra-village affairs and may even become a marriage surety if there is no more suitable person available. Also in time the husband's position in the village changes. As his children grow up and become active members in the matrilineage, his position of husband becomes supplanted by his position of father, which, in a matrilineal society like that of the Yao, is significant in the same way as that of the mother's brother is in patrilineal societies.

593 The Yao recognize the close bond between father and child.
842 This bond is conceived to be both social and physical and is

[1] See Chap. V, p. 119.

567 **Slavery.** Slaves were acquired by capture or purchase, or were received as payment. Prisoners taken by the vassals of one chief in a fight with the partisans of another chief became slaves. Slave raids were also made by the Wayao upon the weaker Anyanja or again expeditions were sent out hundreds of miles away into the Chipeta country to buy slaves.

[422] Slaves were a man's goods and chattels, to do with mainly as he pleased, but no man might kill a slave without bringing the case before his chief and obtaining consent. While some were bought and sold and sometimes found their way into a slave caravan bound for the coast, many, perhaps the majority, lived the life of ordinary individuals in the villages. A man who was unhappy in a village and wished to escape from his vassaldom might run away to another village and there commit some act so that he might be claimed as a slave. The custom was to go to the village and sit by the site of a house which had been pulled down after the death of the occupant, and the saying is, "He has been called by the dead man's spirit."

●[554] Many a slave has become an important man in the village and slaves were often the trusted advisers of their chiefs, but there was no means of becoming a freeman. Neither a slave himself nor a second party could purchase his freedom. A slave capturing another man in warfare, for instance, could not ask for his own freedom in exchange for his captive, but anyone so taken became, in a way, the slave of a slave, and the master could not sell the second slave without the permission of the slave captor. An old slave might often be allowed to do just as he pleased and to all intents and purposes was a free man, but he was never actually freed. A slave might earn a return for work done for others than his master; part of this he would probably give to his master, but there was no regular tax upon such earnings.

The idea in accumulating slaves seems to have been to increase the population of the villages and hence their power and progeny. This is borne out by the fact that marriage [582] between free men and slaves was allowed. Marriage between a free man and a slave woman was unaccompanied by any ceremony and was therefore rather in the nature of recognised concubinage. Such a wife, if unsatisfactory, could be sold out of the village, but generally she was well treated. The children of two slaves were of course born into slavery; the children of a slave woman by a freeman husband, were not quite emancipated, as the father could not remove the child from the village of the slave mother's master, and in very extreme cases, it might be sold by him.

Women might marry slave husbands and often a master married his daughters to his slave men whom he thought well of. This amounted to a guarantee to the slave that he [421] would never be parted with. A woman with a slave husband could not leave him informally; she could not sell him, inasmuch as women have no property.

643 423 **Land Ownership.** The ownership of all land was vested in the chief, but he appeared to hold it in surety for all the people over which he ruled. Headmen had no land rights.

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909) 1910 FT7 Yao FT7 Maravi FR4

case *mwavi* might be administered; if adjudged guilty the accused would be burned on a pile of wood. M 695

Evidence is given without taking any oath; a false witness is not punished. M 696

Justice is occasionally summary. At Mponda's, after conviction of adultery with one of the chief's wives, a man's throat was cut on the spot. Drowning was the usual punishment with Mponda.

Punishments for all offences practically meant payment.

CUSTOMS, SALUTATIONS, ETC.

The correct salutation among Machinga Yao and Mañanja on meeting is clapping the hands, the hands in front of and at right angles to the body parallel to each other, thumbs against the fingers. The clapping should be continued for ten minutes after having passed; after passing a chief it should be continued for half-an-hour. M Y 576

Another form consists in slowly beating the breast with the right hand, the head slightly inclined forward. The lower in station makes salutation first to the higher, a man to a chief, a woman to a man; exception is made in the case of an old woman, who is saluted by the man. Scattered all over the country a raising of one or both arms is a common form of salutation, but is probably only a corruption of the military salute. M Y [554] [888]

Slapping of the nates or thigh with the right hand is also seen, among old men usually. In imploring mercy from, or on the first occasion of meeting, the chief, a man lies prone on the ground and catching the foot of the chief, puts it on his neck—a sign of absolute submission. Women kneel at the approach of a man. Words and expressions of salutation are few—*Moyo* (=heart) being the only old expression used. Now commonly one hears a word (sounding like *mōné*) probably a corruption of good morning, and the Swahili greeting *Sukuári* with the double hand-shake of Mohammedans. M Y [201] [562] [177]

A man returned to his village after an absence rests awhile, then his wife comes to him and kneeling greets him, *moyo*, her husband returning *moyo*.

Years ago, a man of any importance was received with firing of guns and shouting. A headman is received now with *Ntungululu*, the women wobbling their tongues in their mouths. Ashes are put on the head as a sign of joy. M Y [152]

In the morning the husband and wife do not greet each other, but in the village friends "give each other good morning" (=*Moyo*). On waking in the morning, a woman cracks all her joints (=*Kulisa chala*). She then massages her husband and cracks the joints of his fingers. M Y [512] [576]

One man wishing to see another goes to his house, and squatting outside the door cries "*Icho!*" three times (=there), at the same time clapping his hands. If no answer be given he goes away, even though he knows the man is within, no answer meaning that the inmate does not wish to be seen. If invited to enter he does so, the man of the house rises and gives him salutation. He makes small M 574 576

4: Stannus D-5 (ca. 1909)1910 FT7 Yao FT7
Maravi FR4

M Y 614 [579] Men of the same clan must help each other. Two men of different clans fighting will be joined each by men of his clan; such two men may be interfered with and stopped fighting by someone of the same clan, but not by others. A fight between men of different clans is a lasting thing, not so a quarrel in the clan.

Every clan has a (king) *Karonga* and a (prince) *Chilembwe*, who is his son. These grades are only found among the Nyanja peoples.

M [264] [554] The Karonga may break bones when eating—this is significant of his power to break anything; the Chilembwe may not do so, being without land. Neither may eat while walking. These two are always chiefs.

Clan names.—In Machila men's songs one hears a number of clan names repeated sometimes.

After sneezing people sometimes exclaim, "*Mwasa wa . . .*; *Mdzukulu wa . . .*; *Kubala kwa . . .*" (giving name of clan).

A man hearing another say this asks him, "Where do you come from?" He tells him, giving him names of his father and mother, etc.; if he does not know them he gives names of generations before.

The following are a few clan names:—

Achitolo, small rat.
Anamvula, rain.
Azimbiri, puff-adder.
Achikalemba.
Achikalilla.
Achingumina, thunder.
Achimaunde, cloud.
Amwali-mpoi, hartebeests.
Anbiwi, pig.
Ang'oni, birds.
Achiombe, fish.
Achinamombe.

MARRIAGE.

M 584 A man seeing a girl he would like to marry deputes his brother to go to the brother of the girl, who then calls the girl's maternal uncle, and he speaks to the mother on the subject. The mother consults the girl; if she refuse, nothing further is done. If she consents, the man calls his relations to come and be witness of his taking the girl as his wife; they meet in the *Bwalo*. A house is assigned to the man in the village of the girl and there they go to live.

M 585 After six months the mother of the girl prepares beer. The uncles of the young couple, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers are invited. The girl's maternal uncle then speaks, addressing himself to the maternal uncle of the husband, saying, "We have called you here to drink beer and to see the house of your brother that you may return when you like. Should anything arise between these two newly married ones in the nature of a dispute, let them come to their respective uncles about the matter."

Then five pots of beer are drunk in the village, two are reserved for the witnesses to drink in the evening, and one for the two fathers and the headman.

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

authorities to-day: those of the British administration. Yet the headman is a key official, if usually unpaid, in that administration. For example, he has to report suspicious deaths and illnesses and strangers, and he has to see that his villagers keep the village clean, hoe paths, use latrines, follow agricultural and veterinary regulations, pay tax, &c. He is no more ready than they are to accept these as good, but he tries to enforce the rules for he is liable to be punished if he does not, by fining, imprisonment, and ultimately deposition. As he applies these unwelcome and unaccepted rules, his position becomes subject to still greater strains.

II. THE YAO OF SOUTHERN NYASALAND

J. C. MITCHELL

THE Yao people were notorious at the end of last century because of their reputation as slavers. Livingstone had noted their close association with the Arabs in this trade and much of the effort of the early administrators of Nyasaland was directed to suppressing the slaving activities of the Yao. While the slave trade has been fairly well studied, the associated but different phenomenon of domestic slavery has not been nearly so thoroughly investigated. It seems that domestic slavery was an important part of the Yao social structure in those days, before the coming of the white man abolished at one stroke this and many other social institutions. But, though the institution of domestic slavery ceased to exist, the system of values upon which it was built still survives and still affects the social structure of the modern Yao. We might summarize this system of values by saying that the status of a man depends on the number of people over whom he exercises certain rights and for whom, in turn, he is responsible. In the past, a man could increase his status in the community by acquiring slaves. This he did by buying them with calico obtained through the slave trade, or with ivory, beeswax, tobacco, and other natural products; by taking them in compensation for the death of a relative; or simply by kidnapping them. Slaves were often taken as spouses by the members of the group over which the man exercised his command, or by the man himself as wives, and thus the group was further enlarged by natural increase. Though these slaves and slave-children had fairly well-defined rights, they were not free to leave the command of their owner, and the group was from that point of view a stable one. The leader's command over his matrilineal and other relatives, however, was not so absolute and it is with this aspect of the social structure that I am here concerned. This system of values still persists and forms the basis for evaluating the status of men in the Yao community. The high status of a village headman is usually expressed in such terms as: ' He is a big man—he has many people ', or ' he has many huts '. The village headman himself and the men under him are motivated by the same system of values so that in any village at any time there is a balance between the desire of certain members of that village to break away and establish units with their own dependants, and the desire of the headman to retain those people under his charge.

The tensions that exist in this situation are well recognized by the Yao and they always express them explicitly during the ceremonial succession to village headman-

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

ship. The difficulties of his position are brought home to the neophyte village headman in speeches made by old and experienced men. On one such occasion I heard a man say, ' Some men who marry into a village are bad and can split a village like this one by telling lies to the headman, saying that his sisters are talking behind his back and are insulting him. When a headman hears all this he might break his village by ill-treating his relatives, thus causing himself to be left all alone.' In this way the headman's responsibility for maintaining harmonious relations between the members of the village and himself is emphasized. His failure to do so results in what they call a break in the village—the departure of some of the members to live elsewhere—which is a severe blow to the status of the headman. In fact, he is dependent on his dependants for status, and the Yao are quick to point this out to neophyte headmen, saying, ' A tree cannot grow without branches.'

We can better understand the situation if we consider the social structure of the Yao village a little more closely. The Yao are a matrilineal people and are dominantly matrilocal. They live in small groups of huts scattered fairly evenly over the country and from a few hundred yards to possibly a mile or so apart. Such clusters may contain as few as five or as many as sixty or more huts, occupied by between 20 and 200 people.

These people are almost always kinsfolk, and in the smaller villages they are usually all either matrilineal descendants of a common ancestress or their spouses. In the larger groups there is a more complex situation which I shall analyse below. In the simpler groups there may be no male matrilineal descendant in the village and the leadership of the group is taken over by a senior female descendant of the founder of the village. Usually, however, if the group is large, one of the male matrilineal descendants lives patrilocally in the village and assumes leadership.

The relationship between a male matrilineal descendant and the female matrilineal descendants who are in his charge is signified by the word ' *mbumba* '. The word particularly refers to the relationship between a man and his sisters and I have therefore translated it as ' sorority-group '. It includes a man's full sisters, matrilineal female collaterals (whom he calls sisters), their female children, and the female children of those female children, and so on. It is usually used in the sense of ' somebody's sorority-group '. A man belonging to the descent-group of the sorority-group may refer to these women as ' our sorority-group '. The man who is in charge of the sorority-group is referred to as the *ajeni mbumba*. This could be translated as ' owner of the sorority-group ' but because of the property associations with the word ' owner ' in our language, I have instead translated this as ' warden of the sorority-group ' which expresses more accurately the relationship between a man and his female relatives. Even in those groups where there is a female in charge of the village and no male matrilineal descendant is resident in the group, there is usually some one man, possibly married in some other village, who is warden of the sorority-group. The warden of a sorority-group has certain precise duties to perform on behalf of his charges. First, he is concerned with the good relations between members of the sorority-group and with other such groups. He has to settle most of the domestic quarrels that take place between members of the sorority-groups. Second, and this is considered to be a most important function, he is the person who is the

marriage-surety for the marriages of the members of the group. Briefly this means that he must be approached before a marriage can be legally contracted by any member of his charge, he or his representative is present at the ceremony which formally announces the marriage, and he is responsible for the behaviour of his female relative in that marriage. Third, he is immediately concerned with the physical welfare and health of his sorority-group. He must track down the sorcerers causing their illnesses and supply the medicine to heal them. He has to arrange for the ritual purification of mourners after the death of one of the sorority-group's members. Fourth, he must be present in the court-house if one of his charges is involved in a case and he is usually looked to for the money for the fine. I have known a case not to begin because the warden of the sorority-group was not present. Frequently if the husbands of the female members of his charge default, he has to provide the hut-tax money.

Usually the warden of the sorority-group is the eldest brother of a group of adult full sisters. The younger brothers of the group of sisters, while concerned with their welfare, do not stand in this particular responsible position. They refer to the sorority-group as ' our sorority-group '. The elder brother refers to the sorority-group, be it noted, as ' my sorority-group ', and this sets him over and against his younger brothers. The position that the warden holds, however, is not rigidly fixed, for a younger brother may assume control of the sorority-group if for some reason he is dissatisfied with the way in which affairs are being conducted, and is able so to assert himself.

If we recall that the status of a man in a Yao community is determined by the number of dependants that he can command, it is easy to see that relationships between an elder brother and his younger brother are distinctive. The elder brother is responsible for the actions of his younger brother in much the same way as he is for one of his sorority-group, and the younger brothers have a great emotional attachment to their older brothers. Yet at the same time the elder brother stands in the way of the younger brother in his striving for status, in that while the elder brother is warden of the sorority-group the younger brother cannot be, and therefore cannot have dependants and status. It is not surprising to find that accusations of sorcery are frequently made between brothers and the result often is that the younger brother takes the sorority-group away from his sorcerer brother to some other place and sets up a new village with it. Therefore, one possible source of instability in a Yao village lies in the operation of the kinship system in a system of values which reckons status by adherents.

I have thus far been describing the simpler types of village. In the larger groups it is common for the warden of the sorority-group to live in the village where his sorority-group is. Then he usually brings one (or sometimes more) of his wives to the village, where she lives patrilocally. The daughters that are born to her do not return to the sorority-group from which the headman's wife came but marry and set up households near their mother in the village of their father. Thus there develops in time a second sorority-group in the village, alongside the first sorority-group, and related to it through the headman. At this point we may say that the man's position has changed from that of headman of a village containing a single sorority-group, to the more complicated and less secure one of village headman over a more hetero-

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'In 1946 village A had about 30 huts in it. A certain man B was the son of the previous headman called A_1 and hence mother's brother's son or cross-cousin of the present headman called A_2. B had two wives living patrilocally and while B was serving in the Army he had a letter from one of his sisters (i.e. his mother's brother's daughter or cross-cousin to the headman) to say that A_2 was sleeping with B's wives. When B returned he started making inquiries from his wives and he eventually secured a confession from them. B then went to a man called C, who stood in the relationship of mother's brother to the original A_1 and complained about the behaviour of the village headman. C also instituted inquiries and ascertained that it was true. C then approached a local headman of some standing (whom I shall call D) and asked him to arbitrate in the case. D pronounced A_2 guilty and awarded compensation of £6. 10s. to B. B, however, refused to take the money, and said that he wished to leave the village. D observed that he had every right to do this and that A_2 had no right to complain 'since he had broken the village himself'. B took his sorority-group, who occupied about twenty of the thirty huts, to a place about thirty miles away and set up a village of his own. The sorority-group of the village headman A_2 remained behind in the old village.'

This case illustrates the points that I have made. It shows how the two groups in this village stand opposed to each other in that B's sister wrote to tell him of A_2's conduct. Also when the village did break up it did so along certain very clear lines of genealogical relationship. Second, it illustrates the operation of the desire for dependants in that B refused what by Yao standards is a very large sum of money for compensation and preferred to move off and establish a village of his own. This attitude is also shown by the arbitrator who takes the point of view that regrettable as it is, the village must in the circumstances split, and while he appreciates the headman's feelings he makes it clear that the headman has no one to blame but himself. Third, it is interesting to note that this split took place after the death of the old village headman when the personal ties with both opposed groups were severed. Though the new village headman A_2 assumes the kinship terms of his predecessor and also calls the children of A_1 'children' yet in fact he is their cross-cousin while the old village headman was their father.

The position of the village headman in Yao social structure may be summarized thus: the village headman is the leader of a group which may be a simple kin-group or a composite group of two or more opposed matrilineages linked to each other through himself or one of his predecessors whom he represents to them. The numerical size of the village determines the status of the headman, but the size that it can reach is limited by an immanent instability in the kinship structure which is expressed, in terms of their status system, first, in the competition of brothers for the wardenship of the sorority-group, and second, in the competition between the headman and the wardens of the patrilineally linked sorority-groups, who wish to set up villages of their own.

The Yao see villages as units and this is clearly shown at the initiation ceremonies of boys, when the initiates are kept in grass-sheds, each partition of which refers to a particular village. In the same way a person is identified as belonging to a particular village known by the name of the village headman. Thus a man might say: 'I come from Kumpumbe's village.'

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Village headmen themselves are graded in importance and there are certain marks of rank which distinguish the more important headmen. We have already examined one of the most obvious ways in which the village headman's importance is judged, that is, by the number of people in his village. In addition there are other ways in which village headmen may be distinguished both from the common people and from less important headmen. Thus, for example, some of the more important village headmen have the right to conduct initiation ceremonies, this right being granted to them by the man who is in a way the most important village headman of all—the Chief. The right to hold a boys' initiation ceremony (*lupanda*) is of more importance than the right to hold a girls' initiation ceremony (*sipute*). Yet another mark of rank is the right to wear a plain crimson band around the forehead (*mlangali*), this right also being granted by the Chief.

The Administration has recognized the more important village headmen and has entrusted to them certain duties. By no means all the people called 'village headmen' in this paper are recognized as such by the Administration, but I do not know of any person who has the right to wear a red band and is not also an Administrative village headman.

The status system has apparently been taken over from pre-European days, but it is uncertain to what extent these important village headmen had powers. Some to-day have all the marks of rank that the Chief has, i.e., they hold both boys' and girls' initiation ceremonies, are entitled to the special greeting accorded to important village headmen (*zubahi*), wear a red band, have the right to be buried in the village and not in the common cemeteries, and to have their bodies prepared for interment by people of similar rank. It appears that such people exercised a certain amount of power, by reason of their personal qualities, over less powerful neighbours, and some were able in the past to demonstrate their autonomy by moving off to establish petty chiefdoms of their own.

Nowadays the Administrative village headmen have certain statutory duties to perform towards other minor groups actually independent but considered, for the purposes of the Administration, to belong to the village. The relative importance of the headman is still the deciding factor in such questions as determining who is to be called in to arbitrate in a case. Thus, though for Administrative purposes a small village may be considered to be a part of a larger Administrative village under an Administrative village headman, yet when a case for arbitration occurs within that smaller village, some other person than the Administrative village headman may be called in as arbitrator.

Laws promulgated by the Administration are conveyed through the Chief to the Administrative village headman and in this way a hierarchy of power is being introduced. The small village headman now sees the Administrative village headman as a representative of the Chief and the Administration. The Administrative village headman in turn sees the Chief in this light. But in matters directly affecting the Administration, the small village headman also sees the Administrative village headman as his own representative *vis-à-vis* the Chief and the Administration.

In general the village is by far the most important corporate body in the social organization of the Yao, not only as a significant primary group but also as an element

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

be noted that only 27—11 per cent. of the whole sample of 246 women—had never married and that 23, 80 per cent., of these (or 10 per cent. of the total) were under the age of 20 and therefore stood a good chance of yet marrying. Furthermore, 2 of the 4 women over 20 who had not married were known definitely to be incapable of marrying (one is insane and the other has violent epileptic fits).

There were 53 women who were divorcees or widows (21·5 per cent.), but it should be noted that 27 (or 11 per cent. of the 246 women) were over the age of 45 and therefore were past, or nearly past, the child-bearing period. Those in the younger age-groups stood good chances of remarrying. Table IV shows that though the divorce rate is high[1] remarriage is common. By the time a woman's child-bearing period has ended she has been married on the average 1·7 times. Few marriages are contracted after child-bearing ceases.

TABLE IV. *Marriages and Dissolutions of Marriage experienced by all Women over the Age of 13*

Present age	*No. of women*	*No. of marriages contracted*	*No. of divorces experienced*	*No. widowed*	*No. still married*	*No. of marriages per woman*	*No. of divorces per woman*	*No. of marriages per woman ended by death of husband*	*No. of marriages per woman still existing*
13–20	43	22	1	..	21	0·49	0·02	0·00	0·46
20–30	79	104	36	4	64	1·32	0·45	0·05	0·81
30–45	70	121	30	16	55	1·73	0·71	0·23	0·79
Over 45	54	88	29	34	23	1·70	0·57	0·63	0·48
Total	246	333	116	54	163	1·36	0·47	0·22	0·67

These statistics, showing the early age of marriage, the early commencement of child-bearing, the high incidence of marriage among women, and the high rate of remarriage during the child-bearing period, all point to the high valuation of reproduction reflected in Yao culture. This is consistent with their social structure, where the major corporate groups are kinship groups and reproduction is the principal method of recruitment to the group. Furthermore, because the standard of living is almost at subsistence level, children do not entail the economic losses they do in Western society. On the other hand, they are expected to support their aged parents when they themselves are economically independent. In other words, there are few factors militating against reproduction and many in favour of it.

We may expect the beliefs and customs surrounding child-birth to reflect the value of reproduction. For instance, the Yao distinguish clearly between women who have borne children and those who have not. When a girl becomes pregnant for the first time she undergoes a special ceremony (*litiño*) attended only by women who have borne children. This ceremony has many of the features of a *rite de passage* and appears to mark the passing of the woman to a new social status. Furthermore, women are ascribed status according to the number of children they have borne. The word *awuli* signifies a young woman who has not yet borne a child; *awuli*

[1] Between a third and a half of the marriages contracted by women had been dissolved by divorce by the time that the child-bearing period had ended.

6: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1947) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

ndembo, a woman who is pregnant for the first time;[1] *kavembere*, a woman who has one or two children; *mjembere*, a woman who has three or four children, and lastly, *mbolwa*, a woman who is past child-bearing age.

The information which I have been able to collect on abortifacients and contraceptives suggests that they are not used by married people merely to prevent their having more children, but that they are used by people who wish to avoid pregnancies which would be embarrassing, for example, by a woman whose husband is a labour migrant. To what extent the abortifacients and contraceptives are efficacious I cannot say; some, I know for certain, rely on a magical principle, for example, the medicated cord worn by a man during intercourse. On the other hand, the abortifacients taken orally may have some active ingredient.

A barren woman or an impotent man is regarded with some embarrassment and the marriage sureties (*acinamangupe*) of a childless couple will go to considerable trouble and expense consulting diviners and leeches in an attempt to make their wards productive. Childless couples are regarded as not fully adult and are treated in a patronizing way by those who have borne children. Since a man may marry other wives, barrenness in a woman is a cause of sorrow to her husband, but is not in itself a ground for divorce. Where the man is impotent, however, the woman may divorce him on this ground, though she usually takes a paramour and forces her husband to an action for damages which automatically leads to a divorce because it is the usual practice in these cases for the court to ask the woman if she wants to be divorced from her husband.

In contrast to the satisfaction shown at the birth of a child is the sense of awe evinced when a child is still-born or the woman miscarries. The Yao do not distinguish between still-births and abortions, both events being known by the word *kwasanga*. This is a verb and refers to the process of abortion; there is no term for the dead foetus itself. I made no attempt to enumerate miscarriages and still-births because they are supposed to be due to breaches of sexual taboos on the part of the husband and wife, and interviewees were naturally reluctant to mention them. Miscarriages and still-births are greatly feared, and the woman is considered to be in a very dangerous condition until she and her husband have carried out a ritual purification. Should a man have intercourse with a woman who has miscarried and not yet been purified he will contract a disease called *kwasa* which is believed to be invariably fatal. Still-born children or aborted foetuses are buried in a hole dug with sharpened sticks in the bush by the women, whereas children who are born alive and die afterwards are buried in the graveyard in graves dug by men with hoes. The burial spots of still-born babies or aborted foetuses are marked with a stone or broken pottery, since it is believed that to step on them will induce an illness.

The concern of the interested kin-groups is shown in the child-birth procedure. Birth normally takes place in a hut in the presence of the older female relatives of the woman and the female representatives of the man. The husband's representatives are necessary because the Yao, like many other Central African peoples, believe that an adulterine child will not be born to the woman unless she confesses (*kupara*) the name of the genitor. If she persists in concealing the identity of the genitor, they

[1] *ndembo* = elephant, hence ivory. The terms *litembo* and *ndembo* here both refer to the ivory beads traditionally worn by the woman in the pregnancy initiation ceremony.

7: Hetherwick M-5 (ca.1900) 1902 FT7 Yao FT7

with the dead. He approaches the shrine, opens the gate of the fence, takes a potful of beer and pours it into the pot at the head of the grave. Next he places the basket of porridge and the plate of meat on the mound beside it and retires. Kneeling down outside the gate facing the shrine and a few yards in front of the people he chants his prayer in a monotone, each petition commencing with "Chonde, chonde," "Please, please." All the while the people clap their hands in unison with him and sing the response as they do in a native case in the chief's court.

When the offering has been made at the grave, the rest of the beer or other food is consumed by the worshippers. Guns are fired as a token of respect to the dead, and the rest of the day is spent in dancing.

Such shrines are to be seen in almost every Yao village where the inhabitants have been located for any length of time. They are regarded with awe—the little boys as they pass whisper to each other in a warning tone, "masoka." Should the village be moved to any other district, the old shrine is not forgotten. Periodical visits are made to it with the usual offerings. In cases where the old home has been occupied by a people hostile to the old inhabitants, such visits are usually made during the night, and the people awake in the morning to find that the old chief's grave in their midst has been newly repaired, and a fresh offering of food placed at its head.

Sometimes such shrines are found on the summits of hills which once may have been a refuge from the enemy in time of war, but which now lie lone and deserted. Thither in their need the people make their way with their offering of food and beer, and their prayer for rain or suitable weather for the crops. Near Blantyre such shrines are to be seen on the slope of Mount Sochi and Mount Michiru. The former is the abode of the spirit of Kankhomba, and the latter of Mpalale, both old Maravi or Mang'anja chiefs who doubtless fled there seeking safety from the war of the invading Yaos, and died leaving their wounds to be the *mafungo* or spirit of the mountain. Some years ago, during the fear of an Angoni invasion, the Yaos of Mount Sochi fled to the hill-top for refuge, and there the old chief Kapeni died. He was buried close to the grave of the old Kankhomba, and now, when the Yaos on Sochi make an offering, it is to the spirit of Kapeno that the homage is paid, and the shrine of Kankhomba lies neglected.

Only the graves of chiefs or headmen are thus treated as shrines of worship. The burying place of slaves and the common people lies away in the thick bush, where only the rank grass or the thicket of old trees marks the spot. No offerings are ever taken there, for such as are buried there can have no influence in the spirit world. The dead are buried, the broken pot or basket is left on the grave to mark the spot, and none ever seek to go there save to lay another in the same neglected ground.

II. But the word *mafungo* is used by the Yao with a wider application. Etymologically the word is connected with the root *kufungwa*, which in so many of the other branches of the Bantu tongue appears as *kuku* or *kuwa*, and signifies "great" or "old." It is the same root which appears in the Kaffir word for God,

chief, his sister's sons and his younger brothers.

Besides the councillors, there were a number of officials known as *mapanga* (sing. *lipanga*), which term I translate as court assessor. These officials have often been confused with the councillors, though they were a completely different set of officials. They were not necessarily village headmen though councillors were always so. Also the position of the court assessors, unlike that of the councillors, was not hereditary. Court assessors were chosen because of their wisdom and debating ability and often slaves were appointed. Councillors were chosen because of their general status in the community and once chosen tended to be succeeded by the heir, who for all intents and purposes, socially replaced his predecessor. The court assessors lived at the court of the chief and they were the correct channel of approach to him. No one could approach the chief without at first approaching a court assessor and reporting his business. The assessor's more important duty, however, was the sifting of evidence in cases in which the chief was arbitrating. The court assessor then recounted this evidence to the chief who delivered his opinion and awarded compensation.

In general the picture that we have of the political organization of the Yao before the Whites came, is that of a number of leaders of kinship groups, who by acquiring sufficient dependants and slaves were able to maintain a certain level of power. Certain groups of them were under the power of more influential leaders (the chiefs) who usually had sufficient resources to send trading caravans down to the coast, which in turn maintained his power over his neighbours. In this loose political organization the importance of being able to control dependants was cardinal and the adage "a chief without people is nothing" (*mcilambo nagu ngamakola dlamdo, ngamamo mcilambo!*) sums up the situation pithily.

563 groups presents a problem to be considered but for the main purposes of this paper a brief comment is sufficient.

The Nyanja people who were allowed to remain in the areas continued to live in their village communities in much the same way as the Yao did. In fact the Nyanja and the Nguru are so similar in culture to the Yao, that it was possible for them to fit into the Yao social structure fairly easily. For example, in Mposa's area Mbande and Mbeta are recognized by the local Yao subchief as important personages since they were the indigenous chiefs in the area before the Yao came in as invaders. Both, for example, have adopted [554] the Yao practice of wearing a red band round the head to indicate rank. Both have the right to conduct the Yao indigenous initiation ceremonies. At one meeting I attended Mbande was allowed [554] to sit in a chair while the only other person to do so was Mposa himself. This is a mark of honour since no commoner is allowed to sit in a chair in the presence of the chief.

In the same way the Nguru immigrants have come in small groups of matrilineal kin and have settled either in hamlets alone or set up small hamlets in close vicinity to kinsmen. Their headmen in turn have been absorbed into the general political structure though they have their own language and distinguishing cultural traits. Thus some Nguru initiate their boys according to their own *cidototo*, though others will allow their boys

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V. THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

642 177 The accompanying diagram is designed to summarize the main types of interaction that take place in the political structure of the three areas. Interaction between the social personalities in the political structure can be said to take place in reference to certain sets of values. One set of values is that which the Yao recognize and believe to belong to the White people. Another set of values they recognize and subscribe to as their own. A chief may interact with a village headman because he has broken a regulation which

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177 who are, to them, innocent. The diagram has been divided obliquely to represent these two systems or fields of values. The division of the diagram into two parts depicts a major rift in local political relationships. While some political relationships, as say between village headmen, do not directly manifest this cleavage, in most, as say the chief with his subjects, though the Whites are not present in person, they are there in the context of the interaction. This will become evident as the analysis proceeds, but at this point it is sufficient to observe that the Whites and the White system of values are an integral part of the modern Yao political organization.

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648 In addition to this, there is a hierarchy of status roughly conforming to the placing of the social personalities in the diagram, i.e., the White Administrator is of higher status than the African Civil Service which is roughly on the same level as the chiefs, but both are on a higher status than the Native Authority's clerk and officials are. The lines represent the main direction of interaction.

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563 1. *The White Administrator and the African Civil Service*

By the White Administrator I mean the District Commissioners, Agricultural Officers and other Government officials who come into contact with the African populations, particularly in the rural areas. The social distance between a White person in general and the Africans is much larger than that between, say, an African chief and his meanest subject. Social interaction on an intimate basis cannot take place between chief and Administrator mainly because their relationship is dominated by the pattern of all South African territories, where White does not interact intimately with Black. I have already stated that not many Europeans come into the area. Those Whites that do come into the area are immediately accorded the status of an Administrative Officer and are apt to be thought of as such, though they may not be so. The Yao clearly recognizes that the Labour Recruiter is a different sort of person from the Missionary and both differ from District Commissioners, but

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622 Administrative village. The N.A.'s bureaucracy considers him responsible for the collection of the taxes though, of course, the legal responsibility rests on the tax-payer. The village headman is generally responsible for the various regulations that the villagers must carry out. In practice the Administrative village headman may be in charge of a single kin-group and thus have a certain amount of control over the villagers because of his kinship with them. More frequently, however, the Administrative village headman is also in charge of a number of other hamlets, sometimes completely unrelated to him but who happen to have been assigned to his jurisdiction. He then delegates the responsibilities to the headmen in charge of the hamlets.

622 554 The Yao judge rank among the village headmen largely in terms of historical antecedents and by the number of dependants that a village headman has. While a certain village headman may be ranked fairly highly in the status system because his ancestors were closely associated with the ancestors of the chief, he may not now have many villagers around him. A newcomer to the area however, can only become notable by acquiring sufficient followers to make him a man of considerable power. Associated with rank are the various insignia that I have mentioned, i.e. the right to hold initiation ceremonies, the right to wear a red band round the head, etc. The competition among village headmen therefore, is phrased largely in terms of competition for these particular insignia of rank. They strive to be recognized as Administrative village headmen—"to have a book" as they say, since this at once means that they will receive a remuneration for work which they would have to do anyway, and it also means that they would be recognized as village headmen in the eyes of the White Administration. Village headmen also compete with each other to have the right to hold initiation ceremonies and use the threat to move out of the chief's area to bring pressure to bear on him to force him to grant the right.

692 While domestic quarrels are usually settled by the kin-group leaders and by the husband's and wife's parties conferring together, differences out-